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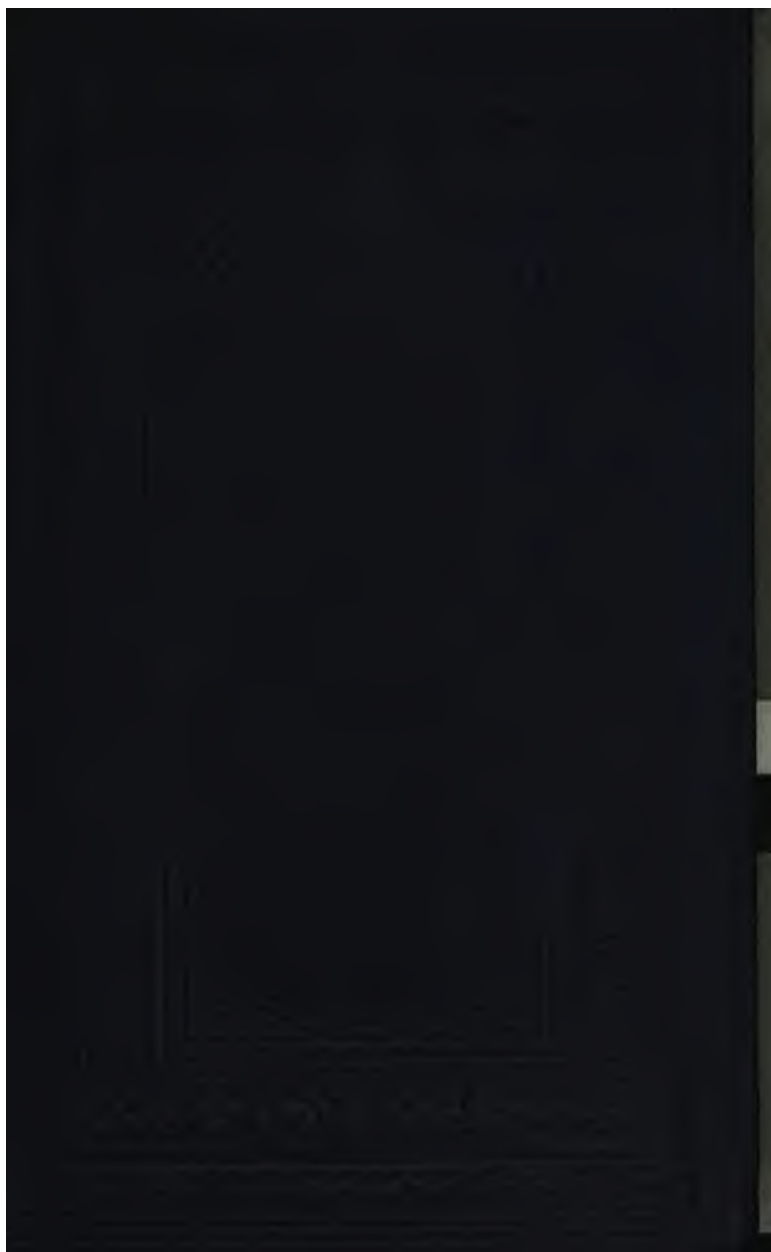
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**COTTAGE SERMONS;**

**OR,**

**PLAIN WORDS TO THE POOR.**



# COTTAGE SERMONS;

OR,

## PLAIN WORDS TO THE POOR.

BY THE

REV. ASHTON OXENDEN,

RECTOR OF PLUCKLEY, KENT.

*Second Edition.*



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## SERMON I.

### THE MESSAGE OF COMFORT.

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ISAIAH LXI. 1.

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

THE greatest Preacher that ever stood up to address a congregation, once took these very words for his text. For if you will take your Bible, and turn to Luke iv, you will see that when our Lord was in the Synagogue of Nazareth, the Jews put into His hands the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. And we read, that “when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was

written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." "And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him." No wonder; for they eagerly waited to hear how He would explain these words of mercy. "And he began to say unto them, *This day* is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." That was as much as to say, "I am He, who bring you all these rich and precious blessings, of which the Prophet spoke." For was it not on Him that the Spirit rested in a peculiar manner? Was He not the Anointed One? He it was, who came from Heaven with a message full of mercy to sinful man, a message of reconciliation from His Father.

And it is this very same message, that He now entrusts to His ministers. And they are permitted to say unto you, "This

lay is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” They have a very solemn work committed to them. God sends them forth. They are His ambassadors. If they are true ministers, the Holy Spirit has indeed “anointed” them for the work. He teaches *them*, that they may teach *you*. And just so far as He *does* teach them, their teaching is right. Not one word can they speak effectually, unless the Spirit carries it home to their hearts. Not one single soul can be savingly awakened by them, but by His grace. Think of this; and when you go to the house of God, try to look, *above* the messenger, to Him who sends you the message.

Now, what is this message that He bids His servants to deliver? Why, He bids them—

1. “To preach good tidings unto the meek.” I have often thought, What an exceeding mercy it is, that God should deal so kindly with men, who have sinned and rebelled against Him. He does not send

them messengers of wrath and woe, as they deserve, but bearers of good tidings ! Yes, they bring the news, that God has opened for us the way to Heaven.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they were driven out of the garden of Eden. However much they might have wished themselves back in that happy place, there was no way of returning. In every direction the "flaming sword" met them. It seemed to say, "No : sin hath separated you from God." But this was not all. They were not merely driven out of Eden, but the *heavenly* Paradise too was closed. How unspeakably hopeless was man's condition ! But God had mercy. He "so loved the world," that He promised to send a Saviour. Thus He has made a way for us to return. He has opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

Now then, hear the "good tidings." The door of Heaven is unlocked, as it were. Every penitent and believing sinner is welcome. He may be *poor* ; but there



no riches needed; it is "without money, and without price." He may be *earned*; but if he has learnt to love Saviour, and to trust in Him, nothing matters. He may have *sinned greatly*; but he hates his sin, and desires above everything to be cleansed from it, he too is come; for, "though the gate of Heaven too narrow to admit the smallest sin, it is wide enough to receive the greatest sinner."

Let me now ask, What are these tidings *you*, my brother? Are you convinced of sin? Have you been laid low in the dust, under a painful sense of your guilt and danger? Are you among "the meek" and the lowly? Then I feel sure that these things are most welcome to you. You will receive them gladly. And the lower you are cast down, under the weight and burden of sin, the more thankfully will you seize hold of the Gospel message from Heaven, which is of One, who has "borne your sins in His own body on the tree."

Is it not true, then, that God sent His Son, and now sends His servants, "to preach good tidings unto the meek?" But this is not all. He sends them also—

2. "To bind up the broken-hearted." There are many things, in this rough world, to bruise and break our hearts. Here, for instance, we may see some child of God smarting under the chastening hand of God like Rachel, "weeping" and "refusing to be comforted;" some mother, it may be in bitter anguish of soul, because death has made a blank in her once happy family. Or, we may hear of one who has lost a friend, dearer to him than all the world besides. Or again, we see another, who has fully tasted of the emptiness, and coldness, and disappointments of the world, a man whose earthly prospects have been all blighted, and who has but little to cheer him as regards this present life. These are some of the "broken-hearted." And to these the Gospel of Christ offers a most blessed remedy.

My brother, are you unhappy? Is your heart sick with this world's false comfort? Is your sorrow so deep, that no word of earthly consolation can reach it? Is your heart so sorely wounded, that no remedy of man can heal it? There is One who says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" "I, even I, am He that comforteth you." There is a Saviour, who has "borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." He can ease you, and "give you the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Happy is it for you, if your sorrows have brought you to Christ. He is willing to receive you, and to give you a far better happiness than that which you have lost.

But there is *another kind* of sorrow, of which the world knows nothing. I mean sorrow for sin, the sorrow of an awakened conscience. King David knew well what this was. And St. Paul knew it too. And all of God's people have felt something of this brokenness of heart. But it is God

alone who can make us feel it. He, by His Holy Spirit, shows us what we really are. He makes us to see and feel ourselves to be "miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Poor, do I say? Ah, so poor, that we cannot relieve ourselves. And then it is that He shows us that, although there is no help *in* ourselves, *out of* ourselves there is; for "the Lord hath laid help upon one that is mighty."

Possibly it may be just so with you. Your eyes may have been mercifully opened to see the full misery and hatefulness of sin. You may now be bowed down with penitence, and feel yourself justly condemned in the sight of God. All seems gloomy above you. There is nothing to be seen but clouds and darkness. For you have not yet discovered the rainbow of mercy.

For *you* there is pardon through the blood of Christ. "The Lord hath sent me to bind up *the broken-hearted*." This is the most delightful part of a minister's office.

He preaches peace to you. He tells you of a suffering, atoning Saviour, of a reconciled Father. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away sin," *your* sin, the sin of each one who comes to Him in faith. Behold a God of boundless love; and that God is willing to be *your* God, *your* comforter, *your* support, *your* portion for ever!

But you will, perhaps, say, "I have been mourning long for my sinfulness; but I have not yet found peace. I am too wicked to be saved." Oh, was it not to save such as you, even the lost, that Jesus came? Was it not such broken-hearted ones as you, those whom His own Spirit had made broken-hearted, that He came to heal? Has He not made you to groan under your heavy load, that you may fly to Him for relief from it? Then take to yourself now, this very day, the comfort which these words bring you. Christ seems to say to you, "These things I have spoken unto you, that *in me* ye might have peace."

3. There is yet another sentence in the

glorious message before us, which we must not pass by.

Can you fancy a more delightful employment, than to be sent to some dungeon, crowded with prisoners, with a key placed in your hands, which shall turn every lock, and throw open every door; and with full authority too to declare that liberty is offered? Hear the closing words of our text, "The Lord hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Ah, how fast, how tightly, does Satan bind his prisoners! Who is there among us that knows not the strength of his chains? It is true sometimes they are soft chains: we feel no pain: we have no wish to get loose: we are at ease. Satan has us in his power, and lulls us to rest. "The strong man armed keeps the palace, and the goods are in peace." This is the worst state a man can be in, to be under the dominion of the Evil One, to be "carried captive by him at his will," to have all the powers of

our minds, and all the affections of our hearts, fast bound by the god of this world, without a wish to escape, content with our condition, and not desiring to be set free. Well might the Prophet exclaim, “Woe to *them that are at ease in Zion!*”

But there is another state. It is this. A man is serving the world and the devil; but he has begun to find out that this service is no freedom; that it is most cruel bondage. He feels uneasy. His fetters gall him. And he sighs for something better. “Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest!” It is a good sign, my friends, if you have learnt this lesson; that the world is a hard master; that to live in sin is to live in bondage.

Let me lead you one step further, and tell you that Christ came on earth on purpose to set us free, to overcome Satan, and to rescue man from his grasp. He has gained the victory, and has “led captivity captive.” And it is when He is

received into the heart, He sets that heart free. We may be tied and bound with the chain of our sins; but He can loose. And "if the Son make us free," then we "free indeed."

These are the good tidings which are proclaimed throughout this Christian land. But with what success? "Who hath believed our report?" was once the question asked by a Prophet of the Lord, as he was delivering his solemn message. And is not this question being repeated by every Christian minister now? He preaches the gospel, in the hope that the same Spirit which touches his heart may touch the hearts of those to whom he preaches it. And though he "sows in hope," though it be oftentimes upon a heart of stone that he is sowing, here and there is one, who believes his message, and lays it up deep in his heart. But how few real believers there are!

Look at our churches—our parishes—how few are living on Christ, and finding



their joy in Him! Now, what we want is, to feel more of the presence of the Lord among us, some token that He is very near, that He is blessing His work. And why may we not be thus favoured? What hinders that a plentiful rain should fall, and refresh this or that spot in the Lord's vineyard? This is the day of Christ's power: why are not the people made willing? Let the Word of God give the answer; "*Ye have not, because ye ask not.*"

Here, then, I give you a subject for your prayers. Pray that God may pour out His spirit in larger measure. Pray, in the words of the Prophet, "Lord, revive thy work." There is a most gracious promise given us in Ezekiel xxxiv. 26, "I will cause the power to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." Oh that this may be fulfilled in this our day!

Yes, pray largely. Ask not for *drops* merely falling here and there, but for '*showers* of blessings' from above. Are there not among us many yet unsaved?

Are there not many souls to be gathered in? And the time is short. Let us ask God to come among us, and with great might to succour us. Continue to urge this petition, until He is pleased in mercy to answer it. Then will our public services and our private devotions be blest indeed. We shall feel that He is at work among us. "God, even our own God, shall give us His blessing: God shall bless us; and we shall fear Him."

## A PRAYER.

ANT, Lord, I beseech Thee, that the  
 rds which have been read, may be  
 fted inwardly in my heart, and may  
 ng a blessing to my soul.

O blessed Jesus, who didst come into the  
 rld to save the lost, save *me*. Make me  
 feel my lost condition. Take away all  
 7 proud thoughts; humble me in the  
 st; and teach me to be meek and lowly  
 heart. Enable me to welcome with joy  
 e glad tidings of the Gospel. Show me  
 y need of a Saviour; and grant that I may  
 ankfully accept His offers of mercy.

I thank Thee for all the many blessings  
 ou hast bestowed upon me. Even the  
 als, which Thou sendest, are mixed with  
 ve. Grant that if at any time my soul is  
 st down and full of heaviness, I may  
 ply to Thee to bind up my wounds.

Keep me, O Lord, from sin. Make me

to hate it. Oh, deliver me from its cruel bondage, and give liberty to my captive soul. My Saviour, I wish to serve Thee, and to be holy, as Thou art holy. Wash me in Thy blood; cleanse me from every stain; and give me Thy Holy Spirit, to dwell within me, both now and evermore.

*Amen.*

## SERMON II.

## THE GREAT REMEDY.

---

NUMBERS XXI. 9.

“And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

ABOUT three thousand years ago, the people of Israel were engaged in their long journey from the land of Egypt to the promised land of Canaan. That was a most eventful journey. God was plainly with them, helping them through all their difficulties, leading them onward, and showing them daily mercies. And yet we find constant symptoms of the deepest ingratitude towards their heavenly Friend. We have a remark-

able instance of this in the chapter before us.

We read, in the fourth verse, that "they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." They were not content with the manna, which God so graciously sent them from heaven.

Now, see how He punished them for their murmuring and unthankfulness. "And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." This was an awful punishment; and they felt they deserved it. What was to be done? They were dying by hundreds; and they knew of no remedy to save them. "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have

sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee ; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.” Now, observe God’s answer. He does not remove those venomous serpents from among them : but He offers a remedy, if only they were willing to use it. “ And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole : and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live.”

How gracious was God, in thus providing a remedy for His disobedient, but still beloved people, a remedy just suited to their wants ! There they lay, hundreds of them, about the camp, writhing with agony, and exhausted with pain. The moment they were bitten, they knew too well that no power of man could relieve them. Their case then seemed utterly hopeless. But now Moses is directed to make a Serpent of Brass, and raise it up on a high pole, so that every dying man who turned his eyes

that way, might see it. And whoever snatched a look at this lifeless serpent was instantly healed.

God is good indeed to His unworthy children! "Happy art thou, O Israel, a people saved by the Lord!" When they were hungry, He fed them with bread from heaven; when they were athirst, He gave them water out of the dry rock; and now that they are sick and wounded, He supplies them with a heavenly remedy.

Here then we have a very interesting event in the history of God's people, Israel. But is there not something more in it? Have we not something here, which speaks to *us* of a crucified Saviour? Just turn to John iii. 14, and you will see.

There our Lord tells us that "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I think it will be interesting to us to trace out the likeness between the state



of the Israelites and our state—between their remedy and ours.

FIRST, there is some *resemblance between their disease and ours*. We have seen that they were bitten by fiery serpents. There was a deadly poison in these animals. This probably brought on a burning fever in those who were bitten; and they died in the greatest agony.

And is there not a deadly venom, which poisons *our* nature? The Devil and his Angels—these are the “fiery flying serpents,” which have stung the whole race of Adam. Ah! my friends, the wounds inflicted on us may seem slight at first. Sin may appear sweet, when we first indulge in it; but I ask the sinner whether it does not bring with it many a sting? Let the Drunkard answer me, and he will own that he has many a moment of sadness: there is many a bitter drop mixed in his cup. Let the Dishonest Man answer me, and he will acknowledge that that word of Solomon is

true, "The bread of deceit (or dishonesty) is sweet to a man, but *afterwards* his mouth is filled with gravel." Let the Sabbath-breaker answer me, and he will tell me that he has felt many a Sabbath pang, as he has trampled upon the commands of his God. Let the Adulterer answer me, and if his conscience speaks truly, it will confess that the stings of remorse are hard to bear. Many a wicked man, as he leaves this world, will bear me witness, that "the sting of death is sin;" and that it is hard indeed to die with a sin-stained conscience, and a soul unsaved.

Now, just imagine these dying Israelites, lying down here and there; first one, and then another, receiving the poison; some looking pale and ghastly, with death creeping in upon them; and others just bitten, giving themselves up in a kind of hopeless despair. Here you have a picture of mankind in this wilderness world, not merely dying as regards their *bodies*, but perishing as regards their *souls*. Yes, here is the

worst part of the picture. There is *spiritual death* among us. Souls are dying around us. Men are passing from this light-hearted, thoughtless world, into an eternity of misery and woe.

And is there no hope, then? Was there no hope for the Israelites? God provided a merciful remedy for *them*, and so He has for *us*.

Let us see then, **SECONDLY**, the *resemblance between their remedy and ours*.

1. It was God Himself who *devised this cure* for the Israelites. Their disease was beyond the skill of man. Physicians could do them no good. No medicine had power to relieve their agony. But God brought them help in their great misery. And so it has been with us. God looked upon us in our lost and ruined state. He pitied us in our helplessness, and devised the most glorious remedy for our salvation. Neither you, nor I, nor any man living, could have

escaped from this deadly disease, this misery into which sin had brought us, if God had not given His own Son to be our deliverer. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 10.)

2. Then there is another resemblance between their remedy and ours. The Brazen Serpent was in itself a *very unlikely method of cure*. One would have expected that God would have directed them to some plant, which they might apply to their wounds; He might have pointed out some herb, the juice of which they were to drink; or He might have told Moses to speak the word, and they would be healed. But no; He bids him simply to make a Serpent of Brass, and to hold it up before them.

And what is the great Gospel Remedy? Is it not *folly* in the world's eyes? What did the Jews think of Christ? He was "despised and rejected" by them. And what do *you* think of Him? If you are worldly-minded, if you have hard hearts, or

a self-righteous spirit, you will not I am sure, you cannot, see any worthiness in Christ. There are numbers now, as there ever were, who from their very hearts despise the cross; whilst there are just a few who welcome it as their precious and only hope. "The preaching of the Cross" (says the Apostle) "is to them that perish *foolishness*, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. i. 18.)

3. But let us look again, and we shall find another point of resemblance between the two remedies. You will observe that the remedy, which cured the Israelites, was made *in the same shape* as that which wounded them. Fiery serpents had poisoned them, and a glittering brass serpent was to restore them.

And this reminds us that, although our blessed Lord was free from all taint of sin, yet He was made in "the likeness of sinful flesh." St. Paul says that He was "*made sin for us*, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.)

The serpent was cursed in the garden of Eden; and Christ bore the curse for us; He died an accursed death, that we might be exalted to a life of happiness for ever.

4. Again, the Brazen Serpent was *lifted up*; and so was Christ. It was not enough that the Son of God should leave His throne in heaven, and become a wanderer upon earth. It was not enough that He should lay aside His glory for a time, and take upon Himself the nature of suffering man. This would not have purged our sins. There was a debt to pay, which *His blood* alone could wipe off. He must die. He must be lifted up upon the cross. These were His words, as the time of His death drew near, "Now is the judgment of this world; now is the prince of this world judged. And I, if I be *lifted up* from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." (John xii. 31—33.

What a wonder! the Lord of glory treated with shame! The Prince of life dying! He

who created us, He who came to redeem us, yielding up His life, that He might purchase for us that pardon, which we so little deserved, and yet so greatly needed !

Christ was “lifted up.” And God grant that His ministers may, by their preaching, ever lift Him up before you ; showing you that in Him, and in Him alone, is all your salvation ; that the Cross of Christ is the sinner’s only hope.

I have now shown you that there is a resemblance between the DISEASE of the Israelites and ours,—that there is a resemblance, too, between their REMEDY and ours, in these particulars:—

1. *God devised* them both.
  2. They were both *unlikely kinds* of remedies.
  3. In both cases, what cured had *some likeness* to the thing that wounded.
  4. They were both *lifted up*.
- There is one other striking point, in which

they resembled. I mean, as to the way by which *the remedy was to be applied*.

The dying Israelites were to *look* at the uplifted serpent, and instantly they were made whole. A look was all they could give. They could not touch it, for it was far out of their reach. The mere lifting up of the brazen serpent would not cure them. They must *look upon it*, if they would be healed.

So it is with Christ. It is the will of the Father, "that every one which *seeth the Son*, and *believeth* on Him, may have everlasting life." (John vi. 40.) The wounded Israelite was saved by *looking*, and the perishing sinner is saved by *believing*. By faith we look on Him, who is unseen. By faith our souls rest on Him, who is far out of sight. By faith we look on Him, whom we "have pierced, and mourn." Our crucified Redeemer seems to say to each of us, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, for I am God, and none else, and beside Me there is no Saviour." Not an Israelite died who looked



upon the brazen serpent; and not one soul was ever disappointed that looked to Christ for everlasting life.

Oh, what power there is in the cross, to pardon sin, to relieve the soul, to give joy and peace to the troubled spirit!

Ah, but I can fancy some of those stricken Israelites refusing to believe Moses, and rejecting the offered remedy. I can fancy some saying, "We will wait a little longer; perhaps we may get well without it." Or, there may have been here and there one, who said, "I am at the last gasp; I am *past* a cure."

What is *our* feeling, brethren? Have we accepted Christ? Or are we waiting till the world has less to offer us? Do any of us think that we are not *good enough* to come to Christ? Are we waiting, in the vain hope that we may make ourselves *more worthy* of Christ's favour? Is there any one who feels that his sins are too great, and his soul in too ruined a state, to be saved?

Believe me, *Christ can save you.* He is


*willing* to save you. Come to Him just as you are, with all your unworthiness, in all your weakness. Come to Him as a lost sinner ; for He came to seek and to save "that which was lost."

If you feel your misery, and your danger, just picture to yourself these dying men in the wilderness. Their case was desperate enough ; and yet one look towards the brazen serpent brought them health and cure. And so, do *you* simply look to that Saviour, who was "lifted up" on the cross. And remember, His gracious language is, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

## PRAYERS.

ALMIGHTY God, who by Thy Son Jesus  
 didst give to Thine Apostles many  
 excellent gifts, and commandest them ear-  
 ly to feed Thy flock ; make, we beseech  
 all bishops and pastors diligently to  
 teach Thy holy word, and the people  
 obediently to follow the same, that they  
 receive the crown of everlasting glory ;  
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HEAVENLY Father, who in our deep dis-  
 tress didst mercifully provide a remedy for  
 our souls, grant that we, feeling our disease,  
 ever look to Him who was lifted up  
 on the cross for our sake. Pardon our  
 unbelief and hardness of heart ; enable  
 us to look by faith to Jesus, our atoning  
 Saviour ; and in Him may we find pardon  
 and peace.



O Lord, our wound is deep, and our sins are heavy to bear; give us a blessed sense of our acceptance in Christ. May He be very precious to our souls. And thus may we daily grow in grace, and in meetness for our heavenly inheritance. Grant this, O Father, for Thy dear Son's sake. *Amen.*

## SERMON III.

## PARDON AND HEALING.

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 PSALM CIII. 3.

“ Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.”

THE great question which ministers have to do with, in their dealing with you, is to tell you very plainly how you may be saved. Oh, that it may not be said of any preacher, “ He never clearly pointed out to me the way to heaven !”

We try, my friends, to speak to you in words which you can all understand. We use no high-flown language. God forbid ! for we dare not trifle with your souls. We have no wish that those who come to church should go away saying, “ I have heard a fine preacher to-day.” But we do

earnestly wish, that some of you might go away exclaiming, "I am a lost sinner ; but I now see the way of salvation ; and, by God's help, I will not rest till I have obtained it."

There are numbers of hearers in every congregation ; and some very attentive hearers too. But yet, how many there are, probably, even among regular church-goers, who have not yet taken in the first elements of the Gospel, the very A, B, C, as it were, of Christian truth.

Now, it is my intention to set before you, as plainly as I can, in this sermon, what God has done in order to save you, in the hope that it may lead you, however dull and blind you may be, to seek in earnest the blessing of eternal life.

But I feel that we greatly want one thing, and that is God's blessing. Without it, my words will be like arrows shot against the hard wall—they will glance off ; they will make no impression ; they will not enter in.

Let me then before I go any farther, ask you to put up one solemn prayer to God, and entreat Him to give you His Holy Spirit.

Now, there are two great things which the Lord has done for us, in order to save our souls. And these two are both mentioned in our text: they are PARDON and HEALING.

We have sinned, and need pardon; and we are diseased, and need healing. And so David says, concerning the Lord, "*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases.*" Try and follow me, whilst I speak on these two points.

First of all, we have *sinned, and therefore need PARDON.*

When God created man at the first, there was no sin mixed up in his nature. When Adam and Eve were placed in the garden of Eden, there was no sin to make them unhappy. God was with them, though they saw Him not with their bodily eyes. Their delight was to talk with Him, to pray to Him, to hold communion with Him. Their

hearts throbbed with love to Him. They had not a single feeling, or want, or desire, that was not heavenly. Happy pair! they enjoyed perfect peace; their path was one unbroken path of happiness!

This lasted for some time; perhaps for some years. And how was it, that it was all broken up? There was one plain command that God laid upon them; and He told them most clearly that, if they disobeyed Him only on this one point, they would forfeit His favour. It was only a small command, but it served as a trial of their obedience. Satan knew this, and at once set himself to ruin them. He tempted them to disobedience. They hearkened to his evil whispers, and broke God's command.

Then came a vast change. They were now nothing more nor less than rebels against the Most High. They had sinned against Him. His favour was forfeited. They were instantly driven from His presence. They had cut themselves off from



Him. He seemed at a vast distance from them. They were under His awful curse.

Such was their condition, and such is ours when we come into the world. We are born in Adam's likeness, and with Adam's nature, and Adam's curse upon us. This was your state, and mine. We must say of ourselves, as David said of himself, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Ah, that is a black page in God's Book, which tells us of our first parents' disobedience and ruin. But, thank God, there is another, and a brighter page in that Book, which tells us that when man's sin abounded, God's grace did much more abound. There is mercy spoken of in the Bible, God's mercy and love to poor fallen man. It tells us that Christ came into this world, put Himself in man's place, bore the whole weight of man's sins, paid the whole debt, and "suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." This is what we call the Gospel, or *good tidings*. And better

tidings never sounded through a lost world than this—that there is a Saviour for all, with a pardon in His hand.

And this is my joyful errand to you—to proclaim this message of mercy, to tell you that God is reconciled, man forgiven, and heaven once more opened. “God has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. And “we come preaching peace to you through Him.”

You see then clearly that man has sinned, and needs a pardon : and there is full pardon for him. He brought sin with him into the world ; aye, and he has added to it every year of his life ; so that who is there among us that must not put his hands upon his mouth, and own himself guilty before God ? And yet there is pardon for him. “I, even I (saith the Lord), He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thine iniquities.” Nay, He even goes further, and declares to us that it is a thing *already* done. “I *have* blotted out as a thick cloud the

transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins : return unto Me, for I *have* redeemed thee.”

What ! a pardon for us—and yet some of us have not accepted it ! God, on His part, willing to forgive ; and man, on his part, unwilling to be forgiven ! Is it possible ? Yes, it is ; and what is more, this pardon lies at our very doors. It is read out to you every Sunday from the pulpit. Why, we are not half so careless about receiving man’s forgiveness. If a Queen’s officer was to go to the county gaol, and read out to the prisoners there, once a-week, that they were all pardoned, would there be any, think you, who would so love their dungeon walls, that they would refuse the mercy offered them ? And yet this is just what numbers have done Sunday after Sunday ; and what some perhaps will do again and again. And observe too, it is not as if all we had to tell you was, that God *would very likely* pardon you, if you would lead a life of obedience to Him. No ; we tell you (and we have *God’s warrant* for it), we tell you

that He *has* forgiven you ; that the debt *is* paid ; the punishment *has been* borne ; the blood *has been* shed. All you have to do is to accept it. And, oh, why is it we don't clasp this pardon to our bosoms, and receive it as our best and most precious gift ?

I'll tell you why. We want the will. We are in such a dark, blind condition, that we cannot see our danger.

And does not this prove that it is not pardon alone that God must give us. Man is not only guilty ; there is not only a sentence out against him ; but his soul is altogether disordered — there is a disease within.

And this brings me to the *second* point, which I spoke of at starting. God not only provides pardon for us, but HEALING also. "He *healeth* all our diseases."

To be forgiven is a wondrous blessing. But let a man be pardoned, let him feel that all his guilt is washed away, and that he stands acquitted in God's sight—will this

one make him happy? will this fit him for heaven? Can he enter there with an unchanged heart? Can he dwell there with a holy God? No, he cannot. The carnal mind must be first made Godlike and heavenly. The truth is, we have lost the love of God, and it must be restored. Love to God is like the key-stone in an arch. If this stone falls out, the whole arch goes to pieces. When man sinned, he lost his love to God; it departed from him, and he loved the creature instead. Now, then, something is needed to replace this key-stone in the arch; something to kindle our love towards God; something to draw us back to Him, from whom we have departed. And this is the great work of *healing*, which the Lord carries on in the hearts of His people.

The way in which He generally works is—He leads a man to feel his guilt; and while this feeling grieves him, and makes him sad, He shows him (what he all along knew perhaps *in words*, but what he never before

saw to be a *reality*), He shows him that his sins have been borne, and atoned for, by Christ. The man's eyes are now open, and he joyfully and thankfully accepts the Saviour's ransom. And now that he sees God to be his Father, a God of love, and feels *himself* to be a poor, guilty, but forgiven child, his heart swells with gratitude; love to God springs up within him; and he gives himself to Him.

This is usually the method which the Holy Spirit employs in bringing a soul to Himself. This is the blessed way in which God works His cure. He works by love. And oh, how free and undeserved on our part! Undeserved, do I say? Why, who is there among us that does not *deserve* to be cast off for ever? How would it be if we had our earnings? "The wages of sin (says the Apostle) is *death*." If we stood upon our strict dues, and claimed the payment of our wages, we should have eternal death as our portion. But he adds, "The gift of God is eternal life." Think of

the freeness of this gift ! pardon purchased for a world of sinners ! and offered to all, without money and without price ! And think what a mercy it is, that whilst many have not yet heard the glad news, it is proclaimed to *you*. We may indeed say, " Blessed are the ears which hear the things that ye hear ; for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

You see then how amply God has provided for His people. They are guilty, and He has provided a *Pardon* for them : and they are in a diseased condition, and He has provided a gracious means for *Healing* them.

Now for one or two remarks to bring this great matter home.

I will first ask you, *Do you feel your guilt ?* If not, pray that you may. Go at this moment, and kneel down before God, with this simple prayer, " Lord, show me my

guilt: make me to feel my sinfulness and danger." But if you *have* felt it, and *do* feel it *now*, then I would next say to you accept at once the pardon that is offered you. There is a pardon for all; but we must claim it. A pardon unreceived can no more save the soul, than a medicine unreceived can cure the body. Hear what God says; "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." We must *look*, we must *believe*, we must *receive* the truth of God, else we cannot be saved. The light may shine without, but if the eyes be shut against it, all within is darkness. Pardon is laid down, as it were, at the door of each heart; but it will do nothing for that heart till it has entered in.

Then I implore you to accept it. Do not say to yourself, "I must *buy* it." No, for you have nothing to buy it with, nothing to give. Don't say to yourself, "I must wait a little while, that I may try and *deserve* this blessed pardon." No, you will never deserve it. Go as a worthless creature



and beg for it. Do not say, "This pardon may be for *others*, but it is not for *me*." Do you not read in God's Word, that "He was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing unto them their trespasses"? And when this message comes to you, as it does this day, what does it mean, but that God has reconciled *you* to Himself, not imputing (or reckoning) *your* trespasses to you? Do not doubt God's willingness, but take Him at His word.

Lastly, when you have accepted God's pardon, *show your thankfulness* by giving yourself to Him.

God's service is "perfect freedom." But then it is only so to those who love Him. To all the rest it is perfect bondage and drudgery. If we really wish to be holy and happy, we must walk with God, and submit ourselves to Him. But no man *can* do this, whilst he feels the weight of unpardoned sin on his conscience. But when his soul accepts the good news, that an atonement for sin has been made, and accepted, he can

look up to God as His Father ; he now “draws near with a true heart, and full assurance of faith,” and asks, and receives, His blessing.

How graciously is the sinner thus drawn to God ! His pardoning love, when truly felt, encourages and allures us back to Him. We feel that He is our refuge. We feel that we are safe under His shelter. We know that we are weak, too, and want protection from sin, and from that great spiritual enemy ; and we seek it under the shadow of His wings.

Oh that there should be such blessings for us, and we at so little pains to grasp them, and make them ours ! What ! am I a pardoned man, and know it not ? Have I, all my life long looked upon God as a Stranger, as an angry Being ? And is He all the while my Friend, my Father, my reconciled God ? Have I kept at a distance from Him, and almost shunned Him, when His love has been all that time going

ut towards me, and His arms open to receive me?

Let us then seek our safety, and our happiness, in God. Do we want *safety*? He is our sheltering Tower. If thou art here, although perhaps thou mayest have no earthly friend, nor refuge, nor comfort, yet thou art rich; for nothing shall separate thee from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. And if thou art not there, thou art an outcast and a beggar, though all the crowns of the earth were at thy feet.

Do we want to be *happy*? We may be so. These hearts of ours, if they were but rightly tuned, would begin now to sing a song of holy joy and praise. They would rise continually upwards, till we are called away to join the happy choir above, and mix our voices with those who surround the throne of God.

## A PRAYER FOR PARDON.

BLESSED Lord, who hast sent Thy Son to bring pardon and peace to a guilty world, enable me to see that Thy pardon is freely offered to me. Lord, I deserve it not; I have no claim to make. I come to Thee, as a poor needy beggar, as a guilty criminal. Pardon my iniquity; for it is great.

My sins are more in number than the sand upon the sea-shore. They cut me to the heart. They lie heavily on my soul. Do Thou, gracious Saviour, remove the burden. Thou hast paid the debt to the uttermost farthing. Oh then, give me grace to believe this. Speak peace and pardon to a penitent sinner; and send me away full of thankfulness and joy, for Thy mercy's sake. *Amen.*

## SERMON IV.

SPIRIT OF REVERENCE IN THE HOUSE  
OF GOD.

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 EXODUS III. 5.

‘ The place whereon thou standest is holy ground.’

AND where was Moses standing when these words were spoken to him? We read in the first verse of this chapter, that Moses was living with his father-in-law, Jethro. And one day, as he was feeding his flock in the desert, he beheld a sight which greatly surprised him. He saw, close before him, a bush burning with fire, and yet it was not consumed. He was approaching closer to it, when a voice spoke to him from the midst of the bush. That voice was the voice of God Himself. And He cautioned him not to approach without reverence. “ Draw not *nigh hither*: put off thy shoes

from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

What astonishment and awe Moses must have felt, to find himself thus on a sudden brought into the presence of the Lord ! The very ground he was treading upon was at that moment *holy*, for God was near ; and therefore he is told to take off his shoes, as a mark of reverence.

And what may *we* learn from this ? We may learn from it, I think, that whenever we draw near to God, a feeling of deep reverence and holy awe ought to come across us. Even when we kneel down in our private chambers, and confess to Him our sins, and tell Him of our wants, and thank Him for our mercies, we should feel that we are in the presence of a holy God, and our *hearts* should bow down before Him. But is it always so ? Do we not sometimes fall upon our knees, and rush into God's presence, almost without a thought of what we are doing, just as if we were mere machines, instead of guilty creatures *drawing* near to our Judge, or children

oming to our heavenly Father? And this one reason why our prayers are so often little better than a mockery, and we go away unheard and unaccepted.

But I have chosen the words for my text, more especially that I might speak to you about what ought to be our feelings in coming to the House of God. And I am sorry to say, that I have often noticed how little reverence is felt by some, even within those sacred walls. Suffer then a word of exhortation from me; for verily there is a fault among us, or it would not be so.

Now, let me ask you, What is the place in which we usually assemble for worship? Is it merely a large and convenient building, in which we can meet together on the Lord's-day, to pray to Him, and to hear His Word? Surely it is something more than that. It is no less than the House of God, Christian temple, the Lord's sanctuary.

God is everywhere; but it has *always* been His will that certain places should be specially set apart for His worship. It was so with the *Israelites* in the days of old. Whilst

they were on their journey to Canaan, God gave them this promise, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and bless thee." In the wilderness they had the *Tabernacle*, which was built under God's directions. In the land of Canaan, when they became fully settled, Solomon was commanded by God "to build Him *an house*." This was the famous Temple of Jerusalem, which was standing at the time when our Lord made His appearance in this world.

And since those days, in every Christian country, we see houses of God scattered through the land, where Christ's people meet together in His name. The Jew looked upon the Temple with holy reverence, as the dwelling-place of God. When David was in the wilderness of Judah he felt a great desire to be worshipping in God's house; "O God, my soul thirsteth for Thee; my flesh longeth for Thee; to see Thy power and Thy glory, as I have seen Thee *in the sanctuary*;" "My soul fainteth for the *courts of the Lord*. My heart and my flesh



cry out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell *in Thy house.*"

There were glorious things, it is true, in the Jewish Temple, but not more glorious,—not half so glorious,—as *we* are favoured with in our Christian Temples. *They* had the priests to bless them in God's name, and to offer for them such sacrifices as were then ordained. And God has His priests now. Christ has His ministers, whom He sends in His name, to scatter blessings among you, and to tell you of a better sacrifice than that of bulls and goats, even the offering of the Son of God for the sins of the world. *They* had the law of Moses safely kept in the ark; *we* have the Gospel of Christ read aloud in our temples and preached to all who have ears to hear its tidings. Yes, Christ is there; He is specially there to meet us: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst." What a promise! Oh that we could realise it! Then we should indeed feel that this is a place very different from *any other*; and we should be ready to ex-

claim, with Jacob, "Surely God is in this place: this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Yes, God is there, though we see Him not. Christ is there, if we have but faith to realize His presence. He is there in all congregations, crowded or scanty, on Sundays or on week-days, and most ready to bless those who are gathered in His name. This is as much His peculiar house among other houses of a town or village, as the Tabernacle was among the tents in the wilderness, or the Temple was among the other buildings at Jerusalem.

Then, ought not the very sight of God's house to awaken in us very solemn feelings? Ought we not to love it, *because* it belongs to God, and He condescends to own it for Himself?

But, further, this feeling of reverence should lead us to take a pride in seeing God's house *kept in good order*. I am not one of those, who think that there should be *much ornament* in a place of Christian wor-

ship. I love simplicity, especially in a house of prayer; and I trust that such may ever be the state of our churches in this Christian land.

And if such should be our feelings with regard to the *outward* building, what should we feel when we meet there to worship?

The moment we enter that threshold, every worldly, trifling thought should be banished from our minds. We should say to ourselves, "This is no common place. It is a king's court. This is the palace of the Great King of heaven and earth." "As for me, I will come into Thy house, in the multitude of Thy mercy; and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple."

We go there for a very solemn purpose; namely, to speak to God, and to hear what message He is pleased to send us. We should therefore go quietly to our place, and then pray silently, that God may prepare our hearts, and give us holy and devout feelings. It is very offensive to God, when any one so far forgets himself, as to be talking or *whispering, or in any other way breaking that*

solemn silence which ought to prevail. The minister may not have entered the church but no matter, for God is there, and every word reaches His ear. Why, suppose you were to be summoned into the royal palace in London, and as you entered, you were to see the Queen before you on her throne would you sit down on the first seat you came to, and begin talking to your neighbour, though it might be in a whisper? To be sure you would not. You would enter *with reverence*. You would feel you were in the presence of one much above you, and you would be careful of every movement. Then try to feel, in God's house, that He Himself is there before you, though your eyes cannot see Him. Instead of thinking who is in church and who is absent; what this person has on, or where that person is sitting, think how you may best prepare your heart for the sacred work before you. Hear the advice that Solomon gives; "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give *the sacrifice* of fools. Be not rash with th

mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God.”

In some churches people find a little difficulty about seats. It would certainly be more agreeable, if a separate seat could be allotted to each person. But this, as you may suppose, is next to impossible. And therefore we should show a spirit of brotherly kindness and forbearance towards one another. As to any pride about your pews, let *this* be your greatest pride, to have them well filled, filled with thankful, earnest worshippers. Be always ready too, when you have room, to throw open the door to any one who wants a place. Surely, in God’s house at least, we should put away all proud and selfish feelings, and be kind and courteous one to the other.

Many come to God’s House only once a day. How is this? The doors of God’s temple are open. Prayer is offered : but few have hearts to join in it. His Word is preached : but only a few prize it sufficiently to come and hear it. The Lord is there to meet you, and yet you are *willing* to miss the high privilege,

the blessed opportunity, of meeting I  
 A minister will never feel happy about  
 flock, until he sees them crowding into  
 Lord's courts on the *morning*, as well as  
*evening* of the Sabbath. He can n  
 think that any one can be in good ear  
 about his soul, unless he sees him join  
 the congregation of God's people *twice*  
*day*. God says, "Ask, and ye shall ha  
 But if you don't come and ask, how can  
 expect to have? If you don't seek,  
 can you hope to find? If you don't kn  
 how can the rich stores of grace be ope  
 to you?

I know how many arguments Satan  
 into your minds to keep you away.  
 will tell you, that to come once is eno  
 and it is more than many do. He  
 persuade you that there are many th  
 to keep you at home. And there is ano  
 thing which he is very fond of whispe  
 in your ears; "Are there not many  
 go, and yet they seem none the better  
 it?" Yes, this is a favourite argument  
*him*. But, I ask, is medicine to be despi

because many take it, and do not recover? Are we to give up eating and drinking, because some eat and drink improperly, and so do themselves harm instead of good? All depends on the spirit in which you go to the house of God, and the manner in which you are employed whilst there.

This is why I have spoken to you so much about reverence and seriousness in church. And this is why I implore you, when you enter that holy place, to feel that the Lord is there, that He Himself is present among us.

And it is very desirable to *keep up* this reverent, serious frame of mind during the whole Service. It is a difficult thing to pray aright. It is not easy to keep the mind on the stretch for half an hour, or an hour together. Who does not feel that at best it is hard, very hard, to shut the world completely out? It rushes into our hearts at every crevice. Who does not feel that, at the close of every Sabbath, he has great need to ask God to pardon all those wandering *thoughts that have* disturbed his devo-

tions. Now, I know nothing so likely check this, as the feeling that Christ near, that we are in His presence. He is interceding for us; shall we dare, then to be careless about our petitions? He is winning blessings for us; shall we then be on the alert to receive them? When we pray, there He is, ready to put up our petitions to His Father. When we listen to His Word, there He is, ready to carry it home to our hearts. The Reader reads before Him. The Preacher preaches before Him. The Congregation prays, and listens before Him. Look out for Christ then, when you come to worship; open your hearts to Him. Seek Him on your bending knees. Then you will find Him in His holy house. The Lord whom you seek shall come to His temple, and fill you with the blessed comforts of His presence. To one, who really hungers, will He send empty away. He loves to "satisfy the longing soul and to fill the hungry soul with goodness.

There is one very great fault, and a very *common* fault too, in our religious assemblies



ot one half of the worshippers *kneel* in prayer. What! can it be right to *sit and ay*? If you had a very pressing suit to make to the Queen, would you dare to sit down before her? Would that be a seemly posture? Would it be treating her with reverence? No; you would speak with all earnestness, and you would conduct yourself with all humility, whilst you were in her presence. Just think of this the next time you appear before the Lord. Say to yourself; "I am in the presence-chamber of the great King: I must plead my cause with much humility, if I wish Him toarken to me."

And this will keep you, more than anything else, from *wandering* in prayer. Get the body into a right posture, and you have gained one step towards getting your mind right also. If we all went in good time, we all knelt during the prayers, if we all kept our eyes from roving, if we all remembered that we are worshippers, and that God is actually in the midst of us,

we should not then hear so many sad complaints about our wandering thoughts.

There is one other thing which strikes me about wandering thoughts. It is this. A man complains that worldly things continually crowding in upon his mind, hindering his devotions. Now this perhaps arise from his being too much taken up with worldly things *when he is out of church*, and particularly *just before* he goes there. He allows them to occupy his heart. And therefore, when he is engaged in prayer, there they still continue leading the heart away from God. You may be quite sure, that if your mind is much distracted to wait upon God, you are serving another master. I know of nothing that will tell us so well what our condition is in God's sight, as the state of our mind in prayer. Whatever it is that most distracts us then, we may be sure, is that point which our great enemy has most power against us.

But to conclude, let me say a word *two about* the feeling with which we sho

re the house of God. Leave it quietly and thoughtfully, like those who have been engaged in a very solemn work. How seemingly it is, the moment God's worship is over, to allow trifling thoughts to take possession of your mind, and to begin immediately to talk about the most trifling things. If your hearts are seriously impressed, this cannot be the case. You will feel that you have something weighty to think about, and you will be glad to find one who will talk over with you what you have heard. Be careful then lest you could be like one of the wayside hearers in the parable; and the Wicked One should come, and catch away that precious seed which has been sown in your heart.

And now, let me put a question to you. When do you intend to go next to the house of God? Do you say, "I shall go next Sunday *morning*?" or, "I shall go next Sunday *afternoon*?" If what I have said is true, if the blessing which God offers is *not* worth having, if you are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of

nothing," then be still content to come *once*. But if your heart tells you, that what you have heard to-day are the words of truth and soberness, that God indeed is in His holy temple, and that every time you go there, you may enjoy His presence, and get good to your soul, then let not another Sunday pass over your head, without going twice to His house of prayer, and going to it with holy and reverent feelings. "Prove me now, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, so that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

## SERMON V.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, AN OLD  
AND GOOD PATH.

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JEREMIAH VI. 16.

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”

WE, who are members of the Church of England, have, I think, much, very much, to be thankful for—many advantages and blessings, which we are all far too slow in discovering. May God open our eyes to see, and our hearts to feel grateful for, our many and great *privileges* !

“Ask (says the Lord, in the words before us) for the old paths, where is the good way.”

Now I shall show you that those paths, which we as Churchmen are directed to walk in, may be well called “THE OLD PATHS,” and that this is “A GOOD WAY.”

1. They may be well called “THE OLD PATHS.” When a thing has stood for years, we naturally feel that there must be something lasting and solid about it. The Gourd that sheltered the Prophet Jonah, we are told, sprung up in a night; and but a poor shelter did it give him; for, before another night was gone, it perished. But look at the sturdy Oak, with its solid trunk, and its strong tough boughs. We see at once that it is not a thing of yesterday. Its roots have struck deep into the ground. Its growth is the growth of years.

And so is it with our Church. Look at its framework. In this country the Church is divided into twenty-nine parts, or dio-

eses; and each diocese has its Bishop. Then, again, each parish has its regularly appointed Minister, a Shepherd to watch over each separate flock. And each of these Shepherds, in their turn, is under the authority and control of his Bishop. Then too, in every parish there is a House of God, whose stately appearance has something very venerable about it; sheltering, as it were, beneath the shadow of its walls, the bodies of those departed ones, who once worshipped within its courts. And in most parishes is a School also for the lambs of the flock, that they too may be taught to know that Saviour, who can make them happy here, and who has prepared a kingdom for them hereafter.

Such is the goodly framework of our Church system. To look at it, we at once see that it did not, like the gourd, come up in a night; but that, like the oak, it is the growth of ages. Now and then a rotten branch has been lopped off; but only to give fresh vigour and life to the tree.

But it is not old *in appearance* merely. Trace back its history, and we shall find that it is so *in reality*. How far back shall we go? To the time of the Reformation 300 years ago? We must go back still farther. Christianity is supposed to have been planted in this country as early as the days of the Apostles. Here there was the Christian Church, with its Bishops, Priests and Deacons, just as we have them now. Every minister was ordained then by the laying on of the Bishop's hands, as he is now. Then there was happily no division—no schism in the body: there was one fold for the sheep. Each flock met in its place; and “with one mind and one mouth they glorified God.” The Saxons, who were heathens, got possession of the country, about 400 years after the first establishment of Christianity. They sorely persecuted our Christian forefathers, and drove many of them into Wales and France. Still the little Christian Church stood its ground, “persecuted, but not forsaken.”



cast down, but not destroyed." And by degrees it again prevailed throughout our land.

Soon, however, a worse enemy sprung up—false doctrine, which is far worse, and far more difficult to overcome, than open heathenism. The weeds in our corn-fields we can, by care and perseverance, master ; but the blighted wheat, which looks so fair for a while, and grows up side by side with the true, this is ten times harder to get rid of, lest, whilst we gather it, we root up the good wheat also.

Roman Catholic error, like a blight, crept in, and soon poisoned nearly the whole Christian Church. For many years the religion of this country was almost entirely Roman Catholic. There were, here and there, a few who clung to their Bibles, who asked for "the old paths," and walked therein. They shone as lights "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," and mourned over the thick darkness around them. Every now and then, some

bold champion stood up single-handed, and pleaded for God's truth. When the stream had become foul and muddy, *they* drank at the fountain-head.

At length, as you perhaps know, about 300 years ago, it pleased God that a purer light should shine upon our land. The whole Church, you see, had become Roman Catholic. But at this blessed period God's grace worked powerfully in many hearts. There was a general desire throughout England to shake off the errors of Popery. Men's minds were aroused. They began to inquire. The Bible, which had been so long almost a closed book, was now read. A copy of it was placed, by the Archbishop's order, in every Church. I dare say, if we could have entered our own Parish Church 300 years ago, we should have seen a large Bible set up in some convenient spot, and crowds of our parishioners clustered round it every day to read, or to hear read, some portion of the word of life. They felt it to be a precious

olume, and all the more so, because its ruths were new to many of them, and because there were no Bibles to be purchased then, excepting at an enormous xpense.

Men too were awakened to a spirit of rayer. The mere form would no longer atisfy them : they wanted the reality. The ublic services had long been conducted in latin, which of course was an unknown ongue to the poorer part at least of the ongregation. Prayer was now offered up a English, to the great joy of the people. A certain number of Bishops and others vere appointed to draw up a Book of Prayer, the very same that we use at resent. All images and pictures were emoved from our churches ; and God was nce more worshipped "in spirit and in ruth."

This happy change was called the *Great Reformation* ; because then our Church hrew off the errors of Romanism, and

returned to her former state of purity. not suppose that the Church of Eng was then *formed for the first time*, as if had never existed before. She was only formed (that is, formed afresh.) She sh off, as it were, the dust that had clung her for so many years, and appeared in her former beauty.

Now, there is one point in which Church acted most wisely. When the e of Popery were fully seen, there was dar of running into the opposite extreme. instance, as the Roman Catholics had u a Form of Prayer in Latin, some thou that even a scriptural Form of Prayer English was not desirable, and so they w for using *no Form at all*. Again, as Roman Catholics baptized infants, some that account took a prejudice against inf baptism, though it had been practised e since the time of the Apostles. Then as the Roman Catholic Church had b superintended by Bishops, they were re:

to break up this wise arrangement also, though it was according to the model of all the early Churches.

All this was natural; for when men see any great evil in a system, they are very apt to run blindfold, and are not able to distinguish the good from the bad—the little remnant of what is right, from the great mass of what is wrong. They have not patience enough to clear away the rubbish, and carefully pick out any little pieces of precious metal, which may be still found among it.

I say, this was natural; but it was not wise. And this was the reason why, at the time of the Reformation, so many sects sprang up, which weakened in some measure the great work that was going on.

But see the wisdom of our beloved Church. She saw clearly the great errors of Romanism; and she made a noble and bold protest against it. But whilst she determined to put away all that was *wrong*,

she carefully kept all that was *sound and scriptural*.

Those who had the framing of our Church endeavoured therefore, under God's direction, to mould it again according to the model of the early Christian Church. I believe that the one chief desire of our Reformers was to shape our Church, not according to their own fancies, but according to the rule of Scripture, and according to the practice of early times. Thank God that we fell into such wise hands. Ought we not to count it a peculiar mercy, that He raised up holy and learned men to build up our Zion so strongly, when it had fallen into decay—building it too “on the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone”?

Surely then we, who are members of the Church of England, may well glory that she can trace back her origin to the very days of the Apostles themselves. We may indeed exclaim, “These are THE OLD PATHS; and

by God's help we will endeavour to walk in them."

But I must hasten on to say a few words on the other point that I was to notice—viz., that the way of the Church of England

"A GOOD WAY." Not only are these, as we have shown, "the old paths," but it is also a good way."

I will give you two or three reasons for saying this.

1. It is good to be members of a Church that is *built up in the truth*. There are at the end of our Prayer-book Thirty-nine Articles: and we may challenge any one to read over these Articles, and say if there be one word in them that is contrary to Scripture. Now, these Articles are our guide, and they tell us what the Church of England holds. And, I think, if we read them over a little oftener, and became more acquainted with them, we should all perhaps be better Churchmen, and better Christians.

We owe much to our sound scriptural Articles. Other Churches have sprung up, and died away again; but ours has stood. The Infidel has scoffed at her. The Roman Catholic has reviled her. Her half-hearted members have been lukewarm in their attachment to her. But she has stood firm; for she is founded on a rock, and that rock is Christ.

2. The way of the Church of England is "a good way;" for she provides well for the public worship of God. When we meet for public worship, we have not only prayers to use, but *good* prayers—prayers that wonderfully express almost every want that a man can have—that speak the deep feelings of the penitent, and the holy breathings of the advanced Christian—prayers that are full of Scripture. I have often heard earnest and awakened persons say, "I have never enjoyed the prayers of our Church so much as I have lately, since I have thought and felt more seriously;



ey seem to express all my need." I now that some of you do not, and cannot, enjoy the prayers. Why, if you come to church, and seat yourself down in your pew, and *sit* there whilst prayer is being offered, it is next to impossible that you can take a part in what is going on. Oh, if you would pray to God, humble yourself before Him, and *on your knees* approach Him. *Pray* the prayers. Lift up your heart to the Lord. Ask, as if you expected to be heard. Then you will enjoy prayer. That part of the service will be delightful to you; you will rise from your knees strengthened and refreshed; and you will then find too that you can *use a form*, without *making it formal*.

3. We have a *regularly ordained ministry*; and that is a "good way." It is no small comfort to a clergyman that, although he feels his own short-comings, the coldness of his own heart, and the blindness of his own eyes—though he feels utterly weak and

powerless in himself—yet he is acting under God's authority, and has been set apart for his work in the way which the Scripture marks out. We therefore speak as ambassadors for Christ. We minister in God's name. And we look up to Him to bless and prosper our work.

4. The way of the Church of England is "a good way," for it is *able to lead us to heaven*. Merely belonging to the Church will not save us; this we are very sure of. But if we are spiritual members, enlightened members, holy members, then are we on the safe and sure road to heaven. Others have travelled it before us, who are now with Christ. Some of the holiest and noblest Christians in the world have been members of our Church. Look at Archbishop Cranmer, and Bishops Ridley and Latimer, men who had the chief hand in putting together our Prayer-book. They "fought a good fight;" they "finished their course;" they "kept the faith." They

owed their very lives to be taken from them, rather than give up the Church and the Saviour, whom they loved.

Let us follow their steps, as they followed Christ. Let us love our Church; and so all we love our Lord. Let us pray for our Church. And if we think we see a blemish in her, let us not join those who would cry her down, but let us bring it before God in prayer, and ask Him to move it in His own good time and way.

Let us pray too that the Lord will bless and prosper our Church, that He will lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes," so that she may "break forth on the right hand and on the left." Let us pray that those who have left her may be brought back, and that those who are united to her may be increased an hundred-fold.

Pray too that we may be united, that we may "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind; striving together for the faith of the Gospel," "not like children tossed to and

fro by every wind of doctrine," but "rooted and grounded in the truth, even as we have been taught." May we thus become useful, happy, holy Christians ; full of love to each other, and love to our Lord. And may we enjoy that peace, which the world cannot give, "joy and peace in believing."

There are many who will perhaps say, "*Here* is a better path ; walk in it." "*Ours* is a better way ; follow it." But I say unto you, "Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good." "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for *the old paths*, where is *the good way*, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

## SERMON VI.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT OUR SANCTIFIER.

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2 THESSALONIANS II. 13.

“Through sanctification of the Spirit.”

WHEN we speak of a *sanctified* person, we mean a *holy* person, one whose heart within, and whose life without, are made holy by the influence of God's grace. Thus then in the passage before us, when St. Paul speaks of “the sanctification of the Spirit,” he means that holy purifying process, which the Holy Spirit carries on in the soul of every true believer.

Having referred in the verses before to

some who had gone astray, he adds in this verse, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, *through sanctification of the Spirit*, and belief of the truth." And St. Peter, in the opening of his first Epistle, uses the same expression, when he tells us that he is writing to those who are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *through sanctification of the Spirit*."

Now, we certainly are none of us holy *by nature*. If we want to find holiness, we must look for it in a heart that has been converted and changed. There must be life in a soul, or we shall never find holiness in it. To look for holiness in a soul still dead in sins would be as useless as to look for fruit where no seed was sown. It would be like expecting to "gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles." For instance, if I was to go to some wicked man whom I knew to be living in sin, or to some worldly

an whose heart I knew to be destitute of any religious feeling, and if I was to start by telling him to be holy, I should be beginning at the wrong end: I should be urging him to be what he *could not* be. Let him first awake from his sleep; let him repent and seek pardon from God through Christ; let me see that a new life has begun in his soul; and *then* I might well look for holiness.

When you build a house, where do you begin? With the roof? or the upper storeys? or the papering of the inner walls? No, surely not! The first thing is to lay the foundation wall. A good solid foundation must be made. And then gradually the building is reared, and each part completed in its proper place. So is it with the *Christian* building. The first step in a sinner's salvation is to find pardon and acceptance in the Saviour; for "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And then the work of sanctification or holiness begins,

and gradually increases. The accepted soul becomes a sanctified soul. It grows daily more holy, as it receives fresh and fresh supplies from God.

And it stands to reason (does it not?) that if we wish to have to do with a holy God, and if it is our great desire to be with Him for ever, then we must be holy persons. Our God can have no fellowship with sin. He hates and abhors it. And therefore it is that He so continually calls upon us to be holy. This command runs, like a golden thread, through every part of God's word. In the Old Testament the Lord speaks thus to His people the Jews, "Ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy." And why? He adds, "For I am holy: I am the Lord that brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God; ye shall be holy, for I am holy." And again to Moses He says, "Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God *am holy*." And in the New Testament



St. Peter repeats this same command to the Christians to whom he writes ; “ But as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ; because it is written, Be ye holy ; for I am holy.”

But the Christian sees the necessity for holiness in a yet stronger and clearer light, in the cross of Christ. There he discovers God’s utter hatred and abhorrence of sin. What ! could He not pass by His dear Son ? Did He give *Him* up to shame and spitting ? Did He not withhold “ his darling (as David says) from the power of the dogs ?” Did Divine justice pierce, as it were, the very heart of Jesus, and smite the shepherd that the sheep might be spared ? And why all this ? The answer comes from Calvary. “ I the Lord am a holy God.” And then follows the precept, “ Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

Our Lord came not only to blot out sin, but to rend asunder its chain ; not only to remove its curse, but to break its power. Be assured, if you desire to conquer the sin that

is within you, if you wish to make any inroad upon its dominion, if your one great aim is to crucify the flesh, and lay aside every besetting sin, you can only do it effectually by a daily clinging to the cross. The death of Christ upon the cross, and the death of sin within you, are closely united; for remember, "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

And we shall find this too—that just in proportion as the believer advances in holiness, his happiness advances with it. Holiness is sure to bring its own enjoyment. It is from heaven, and conveys into the heart the happiness of heaven; so that he who is most holy has most of heaven in his soul.

But what is Sanctification? Why, it is that which brings our hearts into harmony with God's perfect law. Naturally we do not like the law of God. It galls us. We flinch under it. But grace makes us love *it*. A renewed heart feels daily more and

more that "the law is holy, just, and good." It feels that the "law is spiritual;" and therefore it "delights in the law of God after the inward man." Thus, you see, the more close the resemblance is between our lives, our habits, and our tempers, and God's law, the more thoroughly is the work of sanctification advancing in our souls.

Again, sanctification leads us to a full surrender of our wills to God. It has been remarked, that when a man can say from his heart, "Thy will be done," it is a proof that in that heart the great work of sanctification has been wrought. There is much truth in this, more than at first sight strikes the mind. Before a man is converted, his will is *opposed* to God. It rises up against God, against His government, against His law, against His providence, against His grace, against His Son. Here lies the depth of man's unholiness. The *will* is against God; and so long as it refuses to obey Him, the creature must remain unholy. There could not be perfect holiness in heaven, if

there was the least remnant of any self-will amongst God's family. The angels and saints are perfectly holy, because their wills are perfectly swallowed up in the blessed will of God. And therefore how much meaning is there in that prayer which we daily offer up, and sometimes very thoughtlessly, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." The will of God is entirely obeyed in heaven; and in this lies the holiness and the blessedness of its glorious inhabitants.

It is indeed a happy thing if our will has been bent and broken into submission; if we feel a desire to use such language as this, "Lord, is it thy will that I should be holy? then make me so in body, soul, and spirit; subdue all my corruptions; break the power of my evil desires; bring every thought, affection, word, and look, into obedience to thyself; 'rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.'" When a person feels thus, and can truly say, "I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold; yea, I

esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart," that soul is ripening in holiness, and is growing "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

When I speak of the blending of our will with God's in all things, I know I am speaking of a state of holiness not easily gained. Far from it. In many it is the work of years, and oftentimes of painful discipline. It is not in the high mount of joy, but in the low valley of humiliation and trial, that this precious and holy surrender is learned. It is not in the summer time, when all things smile and wear a sunny aspect; for *then* it would be easy to say, "Thy will be done;" but when a cloudy and wintry sky looks down upon thee, when the chill blast of adversity blows, when health fails and friends die, when the heart's fondest endearments are forced away, when the world turns its back, when all is gone, and thou art like a tree in the desert.

over which the tempest has swept, stripping it of every branch—when thou art brought so low that it would seem to thee that lower thou could'st not be—*then* to look up with a childlike love, and exclaim, “My Father, thy will be done,” oh, this is holiness, this is happiness indeed!

Earnestly seek, believer, for such a state of mind. Watch against the least rebellion of your will. Pray for an entire absolute surrender, to be *where*, and to be *what*, your heavenly Father would have you to be; and so shall you be made a partaker of His holiness and of His happiness.

Now it is very important to bear in mind who is *the Author of this holiness*, and who can work this sanctification within us. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the great Sanctifier of the soul. How apt we are to forget that we need the direct influence of the Holy Ghost. Owing to our not bearing this in mind, we sometimes rush to the overthrow of some strong corruption, some giant sin, in our own fancied strength. And

what is the result? Why, we are completely conquered. Remember then that the Holy Spirit is the Author and Giver of all life and holiness. St. Paul says to the Corinthians, speaking of some who were living in sin, "And such were some of you; but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and *by the Spirit of our God.*" And again, in our text, he speaks of "the sanctification *of the Spirit.*"

I trust then you understand what Sanctification is; and you see that the Holy Spirit is the great Author of it.

I would observe in conclusion, that it must be a *deep* work, a *constant* work, and sometimes a *painful* work.

It must be a *deep* work. It has its seat in the heart. An *outward* mortification of sinful habits is not sanctification. There must be a holy *heart*. We may cut down a tree; but if we leave the root deeply imbedded in the soil, we need not be surprised if, in the course of time, that root should

shoot forth, and branch out as before. True sanctification is a daily mortification of the root of sin in the heart. "The old man" must be "crucified in us, that the body of sin may be destroyed." It is often long before a Christian knows the full amount of indwelling sin. And therefore we often see a young believer puffed up, and inclined to boast of his attainments. But oh, the unknown depths of sin! And these we have perhaps yet got to learn!

It is a *continual* work, too. What a mistake, to suppose that nothing is to be done in the soul after a man has truly believed; that the work of conversion having taken place, *all* is accomplished. So far from this being the case, he has just entered upon the work of sanctification, just started in the race, just buckled on the armour. He is greatly mistaken if he supposes that there are no corruptions to subdue; no sinful habits to break off; no long existing and deep-seated sins to mortify, root and branch; and no high, and yet higher, degrees in



holiness to attain. The work of sanctification is a great and daily work. It begins when we come out from the world, and join the people of God on earth; and it never ceases till we have joined the people of God in heaven. It is the work of a man's life. And not until sin fairly lets *us* alone, dare we let *sin* alone.

And I may add, it is sometimes a *painful* work. Many of God's dearest people, many of the brightest and holiest of His saints, were chosen in the furnace of affliction. And why so? The furnace is needed. It is needed to "purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." It is needed to burn away the dross that cleaves so closely to the rich metal; to consume the chaff that is so apt to mingle with the precious grain; to wean the heart from a poor empty world; to draw it away from the creature, and fix it firmly on God. Is affliction a curse, then? No, it is a blessing. Happy is it, when it

makes sin more "exceeding sinful;" when it draws us away from earth; when it makes the Saviour dear to us, and renders the soul a partaker of His holiness.

"Think it not strange then concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy." This is the path along which your Lord travelled before you; and by this path He usually leads His people. It is thorny and rough; but in it many have plucked some of their choicest flowers, and some of their sweetest fruits.

If then that path be chosen for us by our loving Father, may it be sanctified to us! May each one of us be able to say with St. Paul, "I am crucified with Christ!" May each one of us pray, as he did, "That I may know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his *death!*"

## A PRAYER FOR HOLINESS.

O most glorious and holy God, thou dwellest in the highest heavens, and art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Thou chargest even thine angels with folly; and the very heavens are not clean in thy sight. What then am I, that I should dare to approach thee? Lord, I am but a poor worm. And more than this, I am a sinful worm. I am guilty and vile. I am lost and ruined by sin.

But thou invitest me to come to thee in thy dear Son's name. Meet me then with a pardon. Blot out my every sin. Cleanse my guilty heart, and accept me for my Saviour's sake.

O my God, I long to be holy. Sin is hateful to me. I beseech Thee to pour into my soul the grace of the Holy Spirit. In thy strength may I conquer every sin, subdue every evil inclination, and cast out

every evil thought. Do thou take possession of my soul, and dwell within me. Holy Father, make me to be like thee here, and daily ripen me for thy own presence in the world above. Grant this for thy dear Son's sake. Amen.

## SERMON VII.

### HOME RELIGION.

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JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

‘As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’

ARE we not all pledged to serve the Lord? Have we not, every one of us, solemnly engaged ourselves to be His servants? Yes, we have, each one of us, done this more than once—at our Baptism for instance; at our Confirmation; and again, many of us, at the Lord’s table. There is not one of us who can say, “No man hath hired us.” And yet how is it in point of fact? The parish we are living in may contain a hundred, or a thousand, or ten thousand people—all bearing the honoured name of Christ—

all professing to be His followers. And yet are we His in reality? Can we say that *all of us* are really engaged in Christ's service? Can we even say, that this is the case with *most of us*? I heartily wish that we could say so. But alas! no. We all know that, instead of its being a usual thing for a man or woman to be a servant of Christ, it is in these days just the reverse. It is an unusual thing—a thing out of the common way—for a person to be heart and soul for Christ. It requires some boldness now for any one to say with Joshua, "As for me, I will serve the Lord." It is as much as to say, "I care not for being thought singular. I am prepared to meet with opposition. Others may be content to live as the world around us lives; but I dare not. This world is but a meagre portion for a never-dying soul. I must look higher, and take my stand among the people of God. It matters not how many, or how few, are ranged on His side: I must be one of them. Whatever others do, my course is plain; 'As for me, I will serve the Lord.'"

hat a noble resolution to come to!  
 you not make it yours?

rhaps you have gone on for years in  
 beaten track which many take, and  
 it is so easy to take. Perhaps you  
 been content to live about as others  
 thinking, hoping, persuading yourself,  
 all will be right at last. But some-  
 ; has lately whispered in your ear the  
 in question, "Is *this* the narrow road  
 leads to heaven?" "Is *this* the path  
 fety?" And you have waked up, like  
 n from a long sleep, and have aroused  
 self, and have resolved to give yourself  
 od. Oh, happy are you, if this is the  
 with you; if you feel that you have had  
 much to do with the world and sin, and if  
 are determined henceforth to give your  
 strength, and your best affections, to  
 Lord!

at there is something more in these  
 ls than I have yet noticed. Joshua was  
*nily* man, a man who had others about  
 and living with him. He was one of

a household. He was not so selfish as to think merely of his own soul. He cared for the souls of others, and especially of those who were living under his own roof. He determined, as far as he was able, by God's blessing to bring *them* into the same heavenly way that he was walking in himself. "As for me," he says—but he does not stop there—"As for me, *and my house, we* will serve the Lord."

And this will lead me to say a little to you about *Family Religion*. This is the point I am coming to.

You have often heard of the wide difference there is between one who is living for the world, and one who is heartily serving Christ. We see it ourselves: and God sees it much more. And there is just the same difference between a religious *family*, and a careless *family*. By a *religious family*, I mean one in which God is honoured and loved, and where religion is put decidedly foremost. By a *careless family*, I *do not* merely mean one in which open



wickedness prevails; but I mean one in which the world is more thought of than God, and where religion is kept in the background.

There are many of you, if I mistake not, who would be sorry that your families should belong to this character. And yet you feel ready to acknowledge that there is something very much wanting. Bear with me then, whilst I suggest one or two means, by which Family Religion may be promoted.

1. To begin with, I would say, *Let the command of God be the acknowledged rule* to be followed in your house. Be not ashamed to declare, that that is the rule you wish your own life, and the conduct of your household, to be guided by. Get into the habit of doing things, not because others do them, or because it is the custom to do them, but *because God in His word commands it*. Let it be seen that you look up to Him as your Head; "One is your Master, even Christ." Let your children, and your ser-

vants, clearly see that *you* fear God, and that religion forms a part of your daily life, and influences all you do. And then will not *they* learn all the more readily to fear him too? Wickedness, like a fever, is infectious. And, thank God, there is something catching about true piety also. "A little leaven (we are told) leaveneth the whole lump." How true this is, as regards religion! We often see it spread in a family. As Andrew brought his brother Simon to Christ, so we see that one member in a household is often the blessed means of leading others to the knowledge and love of God. Now, if you have found Christ yourself, do not stop there; but try hard if you cannot lead *your family* also to serve him.

2. Next in importance comes *example*. The heads of a family have a tremendous responsibility. It is not for their own souls alone that they are answerable; but for the souls of those whom God has in any way *placed under their care*. Have you ever

seriously thought of this? Let me ask the elder ones among you, What are you doing for your children's souls, or for your servants' souls? Are you feeling deep anxiety about them? And is it your desire to do what you can to lead them, and guide them, and influence them, for good? They naturally look up to you; they have a right to do so; and what do they see in you? Are you setting them a bright and holy example yourselves? Perhaps there may be some poor man who reads this Sermon, who feels that he has not learning enough to teach his family, and instruct them, as he could wish. Go, my brother, and set them a *godly example*. There is no teaching so likely to tell upon them as that. I pray you, weigh this well, that your example will be a powerful instrument for good or evil in your families. If you live an ungodly life, it will serve as an excuse for sin to those who are living with you. Or if you live a religious life, it *may* lead many into the path of *holiness*.

3. But now there is another point of great importance, *Family Prayer*. And this is a duty that I would most affectionately urge upon you. I heartily wish that in every house in our parishes, the family altar was raised. And surely it would be so, if true religion prevailed more among us. *Private* prayer is important for the well-being of our own souls. *Public* prayer too is a blessed means of grace. But, besides these, we want *family* prayer. Have we not *family sins* to confess, *family wants* to bring before God, and *family mercies* to praise Him for? Oh then, why is it that we do not meet together in our families, and bend the knee before our common Father?

But perhaps some of you have never thought of trying it. You have never looked upon it as a Christian duty. It is something altogether new to you. Some of you again are afraid to attempt such a thing; and you know not how to set about it. Let me endeavour to help you a little. *I am supposing that you wish to do what is*

right, and that you are of Joshua's way of thinking. Well then, be not dismayed by two or three difficulties, which will spring up in your mind. You will feel perhaps that as you have done without it for so long, you are half ashamed to begin it now. Your neighbours will taunt you with having become too religious. Again, you will fancy, it may be, that there is something different in *your* family from that of others, which makes it seem very difficult in your case. Yes, it is with this duty as with every other—if Satan wishes to hinder you, he will make it appear very hard for you to perform it. I put you on your guard; and, depend upon it, there is not one obstacle in the way that you cannot, by God's help, overcome.

As a beginning then, place the matter before God. Ask Him to prepare the way for you, and to make it easy.

But now, *as to the time* when you should assemble your family. It is very desirable that you should gather them together morning and evening. But this, in some cases,

it may be difficult to manage, especially where the father is called forth early to his daily work. But I am sure that by a little arrangement every family may meet *once* in the day, either in the morning, or at night.

Next, as to *the manner of conducting* your family devotions. Let all be done decently, and in order. You are going to draw near to your heavenly Father: let it be in a serious and devout spirit. I would advise you, if you have time, to begin by reading a short portion of God's Word. Let the Head of the family read it slowly, and as if he felt what he is reading. It should be some part of Scripture which may be easily understood; such as the Book of Genesis or Exodus, or the Psalms, or the Gospels. Having read half a chapter, or even a few verses, as time may allow, all should kneel down, and some\* short and simple prayer should be offered suited to the wants and understanding of all.

\* A plain set of Family Prayers for the Poor is published in No. 5 of "The Barham Tracts." Price 2d.

urely there is no great difficulty here,  
 only your heart is right. It will oc-  
 y but a short time. And can that time  
 etter employed than in thus approach-  
 the mercy-seat of God, with those who  
 near and dear to you? Sure I am that  
 a service is acceptable to God. If you  
 s honour Him in your families, He will  
 our you. He has promised, that "where  
 or three (only two or three even) are  
 ured together in His name, He will be  
 he midst of you." His blessing will come  
 n upon you, and you will enjoy a happi-  
 s and a peace which you never knew  
 ore. "The curse of the Lord (says Solo-  
 n) is in the house of the wicked, but He  
 sseth the habitation of the just."  
 t may be, that whilst I have been speak-  
 to you, you may have made a resolution  
 your own heart to try what I have recom-  
 ended. Believe me, it is a plain Christian  
 y; and I entreat you not to put it off by  
 ing to yourself, "I will think of it at  
 e future time." Act upon it now; and

let not another week come round without having made the attempt.

4. There is just another point connect with family religion, which to some may appear trifling, but which ought not to be looked upon as a trifle. I mean the habit of saying grace before and after meals. I trust that the custom is pretty generally observed among all classes. There are, I hope, but few who forget to ask God's blessing on the food they eat. But I wish to warn you against the habit of merely repeating a few words *just as a matter of form*. This is too often the case. But let us try and be thankful to God for what He is pleased to give us; and let us remember that a grateful heart will sweeten the poorest meal.

These few hints I have felt a wish to place before you; and I heartily trust they may be seasonable.

We often speak to you about *personal* religion—about securing the salvation



own soul. I wish you to think also of *your households*. How often one hears of the wickedness that is going on in the city, and in our parishes. Now, how can we stem all this flood of evil? All the morality, and profligacy, and sin, that is in the world? The hands of your Ministers must be strengthened. They cannot work alone. We must work with them. What good will our schools do, what effect will our sermons produce, if the work is not followed up in the different homes? The state of religion in a place greatly depends upon the care bestowed on the cultivation of it in private families. If the nursery-ground is neglected, how can we find that the plantation prospers? If a sheepfold at home is not attended to, how can the flock thrive? And if God is not thought of and cared for in our families, how can He be forgotten in our congregations. We read in Scripture of "the iniquity of a household." He himself was a good father; but there was evidently something wrong in the management of his household.

It was very different with Abraham. When God speaks of him, he gives him the highest praise as the father of a family,—“I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.” It was so too with Joshua, as we see by the text. And St. Paul speaks in his epistles of “the Church in the house of Priscilla,” “the Church in the house of Nymphas,” and “the Church in the house of Philemon;” which shows that he looked upon these families as little knots of Christians, which made up the whole Christian body.

Indeed, family religion and family devotion is a clear Christian duty; and is it not a most pleasant one? Would it not be a very happy thing to see those among whom you live daily growing in grace and love? Is there not something very delightful in the idea of a *whole family serving God*, and joining together to praise Him for His mercies?

For example, if a man had a large family, and had received some great and unex-

ected favour from some earthly benefactor, by which his circumstances were changed from want and distress to an easy competence, would it not be a very natural acknowledgment for him to bring his family and children in their best apparel, and present them before his benefactor, fed and clothed by his bounty, to offer him their united thanks? Would not such a scene be delightful on both sides? And is there less reason for such an acknowledgment being offered to the God "in whom we live and move and have our being," and who "giveth us all things richly to enjoy?"

Does He set the hedge of His protection round us, and defend us from the many evils to which we are daily exposed, and should there be no tribute of praise offered up from those houses in which "He maketh us to dwell safely"?

Think too what an unspeakable blessing it is to have the presence of God Himself under the shadow of our roof. This is His promise; "He that hath my command-

ments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and we will come unto him, and take up our abode with him." Oftentimes we enjoy the visit of a dear friend, and count the very days that he can spare to be with us. But how much more delightful to enjoy the *constant abiding* presence of our Redeemer, our heavenly Friend! And yet if we worship God and serve Him in our families, *we* may enjoy this privilege. He will come unto us, and make His abode with us. This will give an additional sweetness to our common mercies, will make our homes happy, and will turn our afflictions into blessings. And then shall we look forward with joy to that day when we shall be taken up to share better blessings in our home above, and to join that one great family God's redeemed people in heaven.

## SERMON VIII.

## WATER FOR THE THIRSTY.

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JOHN VII. 37.

‘In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.’

HERE were three principal Feasts among the Jews, the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. At these feasts every Jew felt himself bound, if possible, to be present at Jerusalem; and before at those three seasons of the year the city was filled with crowds of persons, came up from all parts of the country. One of these Feasts is mentioned in the text before us, the Feast of Tabernacles,

which was held to keep up a recollection in the minds of the Jews of their forefathers having dwelt in tents, or tabernacles, during those forty years when they were in the wilderness.

At the beginning of the chapter, we are told that our Lord's brethren, that is, some of Mary's or Joseph's relatives, proposed to Him that He should go up to the feast, as was His custom. Jesus, for wise reasons, refused just at that moment to do as they wished. But shortly after He goes, doubtless with the same object in view which He always had before Him, namely to do His Father's will, and to gather some wandering sheep into the fold.

Among the multitudes who were assembled during the seven feast-days, the chief subject of conversation was the mysterious Person who had been working so many miracles, and teaching such strange doctrines, among them. The general inquiry put by one and another was, "Where is He?" "Is He among the crowd?" "Has

by one seen Him?" And as they talked about Him, there were many different opinions. Some declared their conviction, that in spite of all that had been said about Him, He was a good man; that He taught them good doctrine, and led a holy life. Others on the contrary still held that He was nothing more than a deceiver.

On the fourth day, that is, about the middle of the feast, our Lord, who no doubt had before been fully occupied in doing good *privately* to the souls of those whom He met, goes openly into the temple, and teaches in public before them all, proclaiming Himself to be one sent from God, and showing them their sin in not receiving Him.

But our Text mentions one very full and gracious invitation which came from His lips. And let us observe, *the time* when He uttered it. It was, we read, "in the last day, that great day of the feast." Now, if you look into the 23rd chapter of Leviticus, you will find towards the end of it some

directions given for observing the Feast of Tabernacles. And you will see in the 36th verse, that the last day was the principal day of the feast, and that on that day there was "an holy convocation," and a solemn assembly. No one was absent on that day who *could* be present: and the temple was thronged with worshippers. Now, it was on that day that Jesus published, in the presence of the assembled multitude, that great gospel call, which we have in the verse before us. What a sight it must have been, when Jesus stood up in the presence of that vast multitude of Jews that thronged around Him, and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." He seems, as it were, to have saved up His best, His fullest, His most gracious invitation for the last day of the feast; for then there was the greatest number to hear it. And as the people were now just going to return to their homes, He would give them this, as His parting word to carry with them. His look, His *voice*, the very danger to which He was



en exposing Himself, all showed the great earnestness with which He spoke. He longed to win souls. He longed to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And now let us examine this glorious invitation.

*First*, He invites us *to come to Him*. The people, who were then before Him, had been spending seven days in their various Jewish ceremonies. But now He seems to tell them, that there was something better than these outward ordinances; something which *they* were only the mere figures and shadows. He bids them come to Him, -not to the law, which could neither pacify the conscience, nor cleanse the heart; but to Him, as the Fountain of living water, the source of all true comfort.

And this is just what our Lord says day after day to us; "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." How apt we are

to run here and there for relief, instead of running to Him, who alone is able to relieve us! How apt we are to seek acceptance in ourselves, to look for it in something *we* have done, or in some outward thing which *we* can do; but all in vain. The blood of bulls and of goats, if we could offer them, would not take away sin. Rivers of tears would not wash out one transgression. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. Christ is our only remedy. *His* blood alone can blot out sin. We can only come unto the Father *through Him*.

And what a mercy it is that He invites us to come to Him, that He throws open His arms to receive us, though perhaps we have long closed our hearts against Him!

But some one may ask, What does Christ mean when He bids us come to Him? If He was now upon earth, we should have no difficulty in understanding this. We should feel that if we went to *Him*, deeply sorrowing for our sins, and

earnestly desiring to have our hearts filled with His love, He would stretch out perhaps His hand of mercy to us, and we should hear these words of encouragement, "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace."

Well, this is just what we may *still* do. Our Saviour is now in heaven, and we cannot see Him. But His eyes are still open, His ears are still open, His heart is open, His arms are open to receive us. Go to Him with a humble, penitent, believing heart, and He is ready, most willing, to welcome you.

But, secondly, *What does He promise?* He says, "Come unto Me, and *drink*;" as much as to say that He can fill us, and satisfy us, and refresh us.

And here I will mention a custom which was observed on the last day of the feast, which will give still more force to these words. On that day there was a ceremony, which was called "The pouring out of the

water." They filled a golden pitcher with water drawn from the pool of Siloam, which flowed through Jerusalem, brought it into the Temple with the sound of trumpets and other ceremonies, and upon the ascent to the altar they poured it out before the Lord, with great expressions of joy.

It may have been then just after they had been gazing upon this ceremony, that our Lord rose up and said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." As much as to say, "I am the living water, the water of life, of which this water is but a poor emblem. You have been looking upon the stream, which just now flowed out of that golden vessel; but I am the Fountain of life, and out of My fulness you may all receive. Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

And take notice, thirdly, *who it is that*

*our Lord thus graciously invites.* He addressed Himself, at that moment, not to His disciples only, but to a mixed crowd of Jews: and He addresses Himself *now* in words of mercy to a needy, fallen world. He singles no one out for this blessing, but He invites *all* to come for it—any one, be he who he may, rich or poor, young or old, whatever be his condition, let him only come now, and Christ will receive him: just as He says in another place, “*Whosoever will*, let him take of the water of life freely.”

How low does our Saviour stoop! how wide does He open the gate of heaven! There is not one who dares to say that salvation is not offered to him. If your very name was mentioned, you would be no better off. If some rich person was to give a great feast, and spread his tables, and throw open his doors, and send out his servants to say, “Let any man who is hungry come,” what could we want more? If some person of rank and authority, or

some King's messenger, was to go to a certain prison, and was to cry aloud, "Here is liberty offered;" and while some doubted if it could be for *them*, he was to add, "This liberty is offered to *any one* who will receive it;" would any one doubt for a moment longer, even the most wretched and guilty, that this pardon was held out for *his* acceptance?

Surely, if we are lost hereafter, there will not be one of us who can say, "The voice of mercy never reached *my* ears: the Saviour never knocked at *my* door: I was left to perish in my sins, and no remedy was ever offered to *me*." No, if we perish, it is because we *will* perish; "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." The streams of mercy are ready to flow out from the throne of God; but man, wicked unbelieving man, sets up a barrier against them in his own evil heart.

But some one may perhaps say, "I have no fitness; I am not worthy to receive such *blessings* from my Lord." Ah, if it was

necessary for us to bring to Christ anything more than our empty pitchers, with a desire to have them filled, we might all wait, and wait in vain. Hear what the Lord says in another place, "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.*" Salvation has been dearly purchased, at the cost of the most precious blood that was ever shed. But the price is paid. Redemption is ours. It is freely bestowed on all who have willing hearts to receive it.

Christ seems to say to us in our text, "If any man is *in want*, let him come unto Me, and I will supply him." And are we not all in want? Would that we only felt it!

Our conscience tells us, for instance, that we have sinned, and thereby forfeited heaven. And what we want is *pardon*. Oh, well is it, if you are a seeker for pardon—an anxious inquirer after it. Well is it, if the feeling which is uppermost in your

soul is, How can I escape? Where can pardon be obtained? I know of but one way by which it can be procured. There is but one quarter in which it can be found. "If any man thirst (for pardon), let him come *unto Me*, and drink."

Again, we feel our weakness perhaps; and we want *grace*. Now, Christ alone is the giver of grace; for "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Do we not often complain that we cannot pray; that our hearts are cold and dull; that we cannot love our Saviour enough; that our faith is sadly weak; and that our soul cleaveth unto the dust? There is a voice which whispers, if we did but hear it, "Come unto Me, and drink." If we lived more upon our Lord, and looked to Him more simply, our strength would be more renewed; and we should become more vigorous; and there would be more real life in our souls.

There is another want we often feel. We look around at the world, and see that it is a *poor* vain thing at best. We look at our



frail bodies, and we know well enough that they can last us but a few years at most. The shell we are living in will soon crumble away. Then we long for some better portion, some more substantial world to dwell in, a life which has no death to cut it short. Look upwards. There is One above, who can bestow all your soul is longing for. Your Saviour says, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish;" "I am the resurrection and the life: whosoever liveth, and believeth in Me, *shall never lie.*"

Now all these blessings, pardon, grace, and endless life, aye, and more than these, Christ is able and ready to bestow, if you will only come to Him for them in the appointed way, with lowly, penitent, and earnest hearts. And all this is summed up in the invitation before us; "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." What! you will say perhaps, can *I* be forgiven—*I* who have sinned so much, and so long? Can all *my* sins be washed away?

And can I yet find favour with God? What! can I be happy, who have so long been unhappy? Can my restless heart find peace? What! can I become a servant of Christ—I, who have given so many years of my life to the service of sin? Can I now become a holy, happy, devoted Christian? Yes, Christ says, "My grace is sufficient." And you will find it so, if from this moment you will part with your sins, and go and give your heart to Him.

But there is one more word in our text, which we must not pass over. It speaks of *thirst*—"if any man *thirst*."

Now, among those Jews to whom our Saviour was speaking, I should think there were some who did indeed thirst for something better than they had found during the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles. There were some probably among them who felt that all those ceremonies, which they had been engaging in, were in themselves somewhat empty—mere *figures* and *shadows*,

which made them long for *the substance*. They panted for some better thing to fill and comfort their hearts. It was just this that the Lord offered to give them—something solid, something that their souls could feed on, something that they could lay hold of, and cling to.

And are there none of our hearts that rest now? Is there no one here, who has trod the path of sin, and found it the path of sorrow? And perhaps you now long for something better. You yearn for something that will give peace to your soul. Or, is there no one here who has tasted of the world's pleasures, and has found out their emptiness? If so, then here is just the invitation for you. Do not any longer look about you and inquire, "Who will show me the way of good?" But go with your aching, empty heart to Christ, and you will obtain from Him the relief you long for. Believe, then, there is something more solid, more real, more satisfying, than earth can bestow. There is a happiness, and peace, and joy, to

be found in Christ, which the world has never given, and which the world can never disturb. May that happiness be yours! May you "with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation!"

## SERMON IX.

## THE DRAWING OF THE SOUL TO CHRIST.

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 JOHN VI. 44.

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.”

THERE is a vast difference between coming to church, and coming to Christ. When our Lord was upon the earth, there were ten numbers of people following Him, and flocking around Him; and yet few of them really came to Him in a *saving* way.

How was it on the occasion mentioned to us in this chapter? On the day before, Jesus had been working a miracle; and we were told that there were then present about

5,000 persons. When the morning dawned, He found Himself again surrounded by the same great multitude ; and proceeded at once to declare to them some of the grandest and most important truths to be found in the whole of Scripture. He tells them that He is the bread of life ; that He came from heaven ; that He could satisfy all the present cravings of their souls, and give to them a life that should never end. This astonished them. They could not understand it. All they knew of Jesus was that He had been brought up at Nazareth by plain simple parents. It is true, they had heard Him speak "as never man spake ;" and they had just seen His miracles, which made them look upon Him with wonder. But they could not get their hearts high enough to believe that heaven was the country He had come from, and that God was His Father. "And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know ? how

is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven ? ” “ Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” As if He had said, “ I do not wonder that these truths fill you with astonishment. I know the blindness of your minds, and the littleness of your faith. And I tell you plainly, that not one of you will heartily believe on me, or receive me as the Saviour of your soul, unless a higher power moves you, and inclines you towards me.”

Now let us take the passage before us, and look,

First, at *the fact* which our Lord here declares to us ; namely, that no one among us can come to Him, excepting by a special influence from above.

Then let us look, secondly, at *the means* here mentioned, by which a man is drawn to Christ.

And may that influence from above accompany the words which I am going to speak !

Now then for *the Fact before us*. And bear in mind, it is not stated by man merely, who might possibly be mistaken, or whose fancy might lead him astray ; but by the Lord Himself. “No man can come to me (says *Christ*), except the Father draw him.”

Look at any congregation of persons ; and tell me how it is that some among them have little or no feeling at all concerning Christ, whilst others are literally hungering and thirsting after Him ?

Does *Learning* make the difference ? I don't see that the rule holds good, that the most learned are always the best, or that the least learned are the worst among us. Learning is a great blessing to be sure ; but something more is wanted to bring a soul to Christ.

Is it *Age* then that makes the difference ?



we find that, as a man advances in years, the conviction steadily grows upon him that he needs a Saviour? No such thing. Increasing years may give a man a little outward steadiness. He may learn by experience that the world is but a vain show—that it is empty at the bottom. But by no means follows that he feels any desire to make Christ his resting-place. On the contrary, I believe, if it could be proved, we should find that *most* cases of real conversion take place before the age of twenty-five, when the heart is yet tender. God forbid that I should set any bounds to this blessed work. I have known many happy exceptions, where men have passed the prime of life, and have then turned for the first time where true peace is to be found. But I must warn you against the mistaken notion, that as years roll on the world, as a matter of course, loses its grasp of us, and we get clearer views, and a warmer desire for Christ and

His salvation. I believe that age has but little to do with it.

Again, is there anything in one man's *Natural Disposition* which inclines him to receive Christ, which there is not in another? No; this will not account for it. Certainly there are great differences in men's natural dispositions, just as there are differences in their outward features. We see some men born with more gentle and amiable hearts than others; but we find these very persons oftentimes just as far from Christ as the rest.

No; Christ tells us, and experience tells us also, that there must be something besides these things—something far beyond them, and above them, in order to dispose any one heartily to receive the Gospel. God by His grace must draw us, or we cannot take one step towards heaven.

How was it with the stones, of which our church was built, in which we meet every Sabbath day? If we could go back

a few hundred years, we should come to the time when they lay, each one of them, motionless in the quarry. How came they here? Did they *move themselves* in the first instance? No; they would have remained embedded in the earth, if a living arm had not dug them out, and brought them here, and laid each one in its appointed place. Just so is it with us. Our souls are motionless and lifeless, as far as spiritual things are concerned, until the power of God stirs us, and moves us from our bed of slumber. He alone can fit and shape us by His grace, and prepare us for a place in His own spiritual building. Ah! it is very humbling to think of this; but so it is. And if our proud hearts cannot believe it, we shall do well to listen to the prophet Isaiah's exhortation in the 51st chapter; "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord; look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye

are digged.” But above all, take the passage before us in its plain simple meaning, “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw Him.”

And now let us, in the next place, see what are *the means by which a man is drawn to Christ*. Our Lord, in the verse which follows the text, refers us to a passage in Isaiah; “It is written (He says) in the prophets, And they (that is, God’s true children) shall be all taught of God;” and He explains this by adding, “Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” Then here at once we see *two means*, which are necessary for the drawing of a soul to Christ—the *outward hearing* of the ear, and the *inward teaching* of God.

With regard to the first of these, the hearing of the ear, we may observe that hearing is usually the first step towards believing. It is usually God’s plan to bring

souls to Himself by the preaching of the Gospel. There are other means, which He occasionally uses ; but this is His ordinary way. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." It is the great lever that He employs to move our dull, heavy hearts. It is the hammer by which He breaks them. "Faith," says the Apostle, "cometh by hearing;" "for (he asks) how shall they believe on him, of whom they have not heard?"

And this is why we are so anxious that you should come to God's house. We know that many of you come to little purpose. Many of you go away, Sunday after Sunday, just as you come. Christ is held up before you ; but you have no eyes to see Him. His salvation is offered to you ; but you go away without it. Still we are thankful to see you there ; for if you stayed away, it would be putting from you one great means by which God works upon the heart. And as we see you

week after week, we hope, we pray, that some stray word of ours may drop into your ear, and may work its way into your heart.

But now for the other means, which our Saviour mentions—the *inward teaching* of God. “Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath *learned of the Father*, cometh unto me.” Our hearing will have little purpose, unless the Word of God is accompanied by the Spirit of God.

Remember what our state is. We are in a fallen state. Through sin all the faculties of the soul are impaired; and the spiritual standing, which is as it were the eye of the soul, is in the same condition as the eyes of the body would be in, if they had no light. Hence the Psalmist declares, that none will understand the things of God, who does not have the Spirit of God. And he represents God as looking down from heaven to see if there were any who would understand and seek after God; but He

none, no not one. They all have their "understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." Let a man's mind be ever so well stored with human learning—let it be enlarged with all the knowledge that this world can give—let it be ever so quick, and sharp, and far-sighted, as regards things that concern this life, yet it stands in just as much need of Divine teaching as the mind of the most ignorant man in any country village; because the things of God are not to be discovered by common learning.

I ask those of you who know anything of Christ, and are walking happily in His ways, How came you by this knowledge? Did you find out Christ by your own wisdom? Did you come to Him of your own accord? Far otherwise. You were once far from Him; and you would have remained far from Him, if God had not "drawn you with the cords of a man, with the bands of

love." He enlightened you with His saving grace, and subdued the opposition and enmity which were in your heart. From the first moment that you were awakened, He has been your Teacher. He has taught you to look upon sin as it really is, exceedingly sinful. He alarmed your conscience, and made you feel your guilt and danger; and He has led you, with a humble heart, to Christ for pardon. And now you are willing, like Mary, to sit at your Master's feet, hearing His word, and learning of Him those truths which can save your soul.

Never, never would you have come to Christ; you would have been to this day far away from Him; if you had not been drawn towards Him by the almighty power of God.

And now let me observe in conclusion that there is a way of abusing this truth, and also a way of profiting by it. The best food may be turned into poison, though it



intended to nourish us. Some wrong-minded person may go away, saying to himself, "Well then, I shall go on in sin, till God stops me by His grace. He must work in my soul, or it will never be aroused; therefore I will wait quietly, and make no effort to obtain salvation." And is this the conclusion you come to? Then it just proves the truth of what I have been saying, that the mind of man is blinded, and takes a wrong view of the Gospel.

On the contrary, we ought to go away, feeling more than ever our own feebleness, and God's power. And if we have not found Christ, our hearts ought to be stirred up instantly to apply for that grace, which can alone subdue our rebellious wills, and bring us penitent and humble to our Saviour's cross. Our language should be, "Draw us, and we will run after thee." We ought to put ourselves in the way of hearing God's awakening truth; and since the preparation of the heart is from Him,

we should lay open our hearts to the b  
ings of His Holy Spirit.

Only think for a moment, how c  
important it is that we should come to C  
He is now waiting to receive us ; b  
will not always wait. Remember, our  
baths are numbered ; our Gospel invit  
are numbered ; our day of grace will  
last a certain time ; and then the  
cometh, when the voice of mercy w  
ever be silenced. Hear then, and you  
shall live. Why will ye die, with lif  
peace, and glory within your reach ?

And bear this in mind too—if you  
not to the Saviour in this life, you can  
with Him hereafter. Like the foolish  
gins in the parable, you will knock l  
for admittance, but you will then be k  
ing against a closed door ; the time w  
passed.

Reject Christ now—stand aloof from  
now—and then will your state be like t  
the Jews, to whom He said, “ Yet a

while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me, for whither I am, thither ye *cannot* come."

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### A PRAYER.

O HEAVENLY Father, look down with pity upon me, a poor and helpless creature. I have no power of my own. Sin has ruined my soul; and I am sunk into a low pit.

But Thou hast sent me a Deliverer. Oh, give me grace, that I may look to Him as my only hope. Give me a hatred of sin; and a desire to forsake it. Give me faith to trust in Christ, as my all-sufficient Saviour. Take away the coldness, deadness, and unbelief from my heart, and quicken me by Thy Holy Spirit.

Lord, when I read Thy Word, do Thou

Thyself teach me. When I pray, do Thou give me the spirit of prayer. When I am about my daily occupations, draw my heart up to Thyself, so that I may love Thee, and seek in all things to do Thy will. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

## SERMON X.

## OUR NEED OF A REVIVAL.

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 HABAKKUK III. 2.

“O Lord, revive Thy work.”

WOULD to God that this prayer might be  
 red up by every one of us! It is a  
 yer for a revival of true religion among

And this is just the very thing we  
 st want, each one for himself, and all of  
 for one another.

May God stir up our hearts, so that we  
 y cry out with earnestness, and with  
 h, “O Lord, revive Thy work!”

In the first place, let us inquire why *we*  
 called upon to offer up this prayer?

If the Lord's work was already accom-  
 shed upon earth—if that happy day had  
 ived, which the Christian is anxiously

hoping for, when the world shall have received the Gospel—if those who profess the name of Christ had indeed “departed from iniquity”—*then* there would have been no need to pray that the Lord would revive His work. But if we look at the condition of the world at the present time, we shall see that things are in a very different state from this. Those commands of our blessed Lord, “Go ye and teach all nations;” “Preach the Gospel to every creature,” have not *yet* been obeyed. Still there are many corners of the world, where the Gospel has never been preached. There are many nations, like the people at Athens, who still build their altar “to the unknown God.” At this very moment, whilst *we* are worshipping God through His dear Son, there are numbers who are falling down before images made by the hands of man, gods who have eyes, but see not, and ears, but they hear not. Is there not then good reason why we should put forth our pleading voices to heaven, that God would be pleased to revive

His work ; that He would direct and encourage those who are earnestly desiring to spread abroad His religion in the world ; and that He would so prosper their efforts, that “ His name may be known upon earth, and His saving health among all nations ” ?

It is true, we have much reason to be thankful that of late this great work has marvellously advanced. The “ day-spring from on high ” appears indeed to be dawning after a long night of darkness, and gradually spreading its light over an awakening world. But though God is “ doing great things whereof we are glad,” is there not yet much to be done—a whole world to be brought in subjection to Christ ? Shall we not then offer up the petition before us, and say, “ O Lord, revive Thy work ” ?

And then if we look at *our own* country, where the glorious light of the Gospel shines, and has shone for years, and where the tidings of salvation are so fully known, and so openly preached ; and if we bear in

mind that those are not *all Christians* who *profess* to be so ; this is enough to make us uneasy, and to lead every earnest believer to pray that God would revive true religion among us. What if our Redeemer should say to *us*, as He did to the Christians at Sardis, “I know thy works, that thou hast *a name* that thou livest, and *art dead*”? What if He should say to us, as He did to the Church at Laodicea, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot”?

Is there not among Christians in this country, among the members of our own Church for instance, much of that deadness which condemned the Church of Sardis, much of the lukewarmness of Laodicea? Are there not many—a fearful number in every town and village—who have only a *name* to live, and nothing more? There is no life in their souls. All is death within.

If we look abroad, do we not see *many* ways in which God is dishonoured? How



many are daily and hourly setting His laws at defiance! How many profane that holy day which He has set apart for His own glory, and for our benefit! How many from week to week never come to God's house! Look at the railroads, which sweep through many of our quiet parishes on the Lord's-day, bidding defiance to that command which says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;" forcing all employed on it to work, when God has bid them rest, and holding out a tempting bribe, by cheap fares, to induce others to trifle also with God's laws.

Or, if we look still nearer home, how is it with us? Are parents trying, by God's help, to bring up their children as servants of God? And are children honouring, obeying, and trying to please their parents? Are there not but few, very few among us, whose conduct will bear closely looking into? Oh, how few earnest, holy, devoted men and women there are! How few whose lives are (as St. Paul says) "living epistles

known and read of all men!" How few have counted the cost, and are ready to come boldly forward, and declare plainly that they are seeking a better country, that is, an heavenly!

Now then, are we not called upon to pray for the interference of the Almighty; that He would stretch forth His arm, not to smite, but to save? That He would stop the tide of iniquity, and send such a large supply of grace into the hearts of men, that they may with one accord turn unto the Lord, and range themselves on His side? that He, who could make the dry bones to live, and "of stones could raise up children unto Abraham," and command the dead, "I say unto thee, arise;" would work mightily among us, so as to arouse those who are at ease and asleep, and to quicken those who have set their faces heavenward, but are lagging and loitering by the way?

Indeed, our state is not a right state at the present time. We must not shut our eyes against it. I say not this to condemn

you ; but because I love your souls, and because I long that they should be saved. Let us go then to God with the words of the text, or use the language of the Psalmist, and say, " O God, wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee ? Show us Thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us Thy salvation."

But next, we come to the question, What reason have we to expect that God will bring about such a glorious revival of religion as this that we have been speaking of ? Or, in other words, that God will hearken to the prayer of the text ?

Some people would be inclined to look upon a spiritual revival, as a subject full of wildness and extravagance ; and for this reason, because in some instances it has been abused, and there has been much that is wild and unscriptural mixed up with it. It has sometimes happened, when a Christian Church, or congregation, has been in a decayed, lukewarm, half-dead state, violent

efforts have been made to arouse it. But they have been wrong efforts, unscriptural efforts. For instance, ministers have thought it desirable to excite men's minds to a high pitch, and work them up into a feverish state, by using very strong and extravagant language. And by these means the feelings of the weak have been stirred up and alarmed, and they have fancied they were converted. But, in fact, it has been nothing more than a kind of religious intoxication, which has remained but a little while, and then altogether passed away.

This is not the conversion that lasts. This is not God's work in the soul. We do not desire *such a revival* as this. We want something more real. We want to see the Almighty Spirit of God entering your souls, and quickening them,—the heart awakened to feel its sins, crying anxiously to Christ for salvation, and panting after a holier life and a fuller knowledge of the Saviour. We want to see, not *merely the outward feelings* aroused, but a

great and searching work going on in the inner depths of the heart. This is what we should desire, when we pray, "Lord, revive thy work."

And how, I say, may we reasonably expect that God will give us this revival that we ask for ?

1. Let us bear in mind, that the work from beginning to end is the Lord's. He is the great fountain-head, from whom all blessings must flow. He must quicken, and He only. He has Himself laid the foundation ; and it is by His power alone that the building can be raised up. It was God, who spake the word, and Jerusalem was destroyed ; who commanded, and it was again built ; saying to Jerusalem, "Thou shalt be inhabited, and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof ;"—who warned the builders by His servant Zechariah, saying, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

And has not the Lord the same love for

His spiritual Jerusalem, His Church, now; and the same power to make her prosper? Can He not say to her, "Thou shalt be built up in the true faith, and I will heal thy decayed places"?

2. Give yourselves to prayer. Bring this matter specially before the Lord. Having settled in your own mind that the work is God's alone, then call upon Him earnestly to accomplish it. "Give Him no rest," till He has made His Church "a praise in the earth." The poorest, the most unlearned, can use this means of drawing down the favour of God upon your Church, your brethren, and yourself. And if all would but join in this blessed supplication, we should surely prevail with the Lord of Hosts. Like an army, we should lay siege to the citadel of heaven, according to those words of our Lord, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." And He would throw open its gates to us and say, "I have heard thy prayer; *be it unto thee as thou hast said.*"

Some will tell us we must *wait* for the Spirit. But does not the Word of God declare that the Spirit waits for our prayer and effort? See whether it is not so. "Ye have not, because ye ask not;" "He that asketh, receiveth." Our Lord assures us that the Holy Spirit will be given "to them that ask." The manner in which God poured out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, was the very type and pattern of what He meant to do in after ages of the Church. And just mark *how* this blessing was given. We find that the Christians at Jerusalem all met for unceasing, earnest supplication; and *then* the heavens opened, as it were, and down came the wondrous gift. Surely then our efforts are not to be kept back till the Spirit is poured out. On the contrary, our efforts and prayers are to bring down the shower that God is waiting to bestow upon us. Oh, if we had only a little more of the faith and life of the early Christians, then we should have *our* days of Pentecost. If we would

approach God's throne with fervent, believing prayer, He would give more largely. And then what a mighty change would take place in this great nation, and among ourselves ! We should each one acknowledge that God was with us of a truth ; and we should each one be quickening his brother on the happy road to heaven.

3. But let each true servant of Christ among us, aim at a greater degree of holiness for himself. Remember this maxim, and never forget it ; " When you would do good to others, you must *begin with your own soul.*" The state of religion in a congregation, or in a parish, may be at a low ebb. But it is of very little use to sigh over it, and to dwell on the faults and short-comings of *others*, unless we are trying to purge out *our own*. Let us get rid of our own dulness, our own sloth, our unfaithfulness, our neglect ; and then we shall have a better hope of being made a blessing to our brethren around us. Let us pray, first of all, for a *revival of religion in our own hearts.*



I would solemnly ask those who are in earnest, Is there no fault with *you*? Have you no need of reviving grace? Is your light burning strongly and brightly?

It is easy to get into a barren, sleepy state, and to keep up the *appearance* of godliness all the while. But the heart and core of religion, which is the life of God in the soul, may after all be wanting. To walk with God, like Enoch, is something more.

Now, if our conscience tells any of us that we have gone back, let us inquire the *cause* of our decay. Let us search our hearts, and see where the disease lies. Let us say with Job, "Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me." "Lord, if I have not courage to pluck out a right eye, do Thou pluck it out for me." Be honest with yourself. If God restores your soul, if He revives you, it must be an inward, searching work. You will spare no sin. Your first and most determined stroke will be at the idol *within*, to get rid of that. Depend

upon it, the holy walk of a few watchful Christians—the *consistent, blameless* lives of some ten or twenty devoted men and women—would do more in a parish than anything else to win people over to the service of Christ. Godly *words* will do something; but godly *lives* will do far, far more.

Lastly, if we wish to see a revival of true religion among us, let us try, *each one to do something towards it*. Believe me, this is your duty, and your privilege. Each one has a talent he may employ.

For instance, you can pray (can you not?) for a larger outpouring of the Holy Spirit. You can speak to your fellow-men about their souls. Parents may seek a change of heart for their children. Masters may endeavour to turn their servants from sin to God. Brothers and sisters may pray, and labour, for each other's conversion. Neighbours may begin to pity those about them who are thoughtless, and endeavour to persuade them to come to God's house, and

walk in God's ways. The younger men and women among us may become teachers in our Sunday Schools. Oh, there is employment for you in God's vineyard, abundant employment, if only you have willing hearts to engage in it. And blessed is it to labour, however humbly, in the service, and for the glory, of Christ. Do not fancy that all rests with your Minister. You may be fellow-helpers with him. If a road was to be made, would you call upon the Surveyor to make it, without any workmen by his side? If a house was to be built, would you look for the Architect to rear it, and have no bricklayers and carpenters in his employ? If there was a battle to be fought, should you expect the Officers to win the battle, while the Soldiers were asleep? No; and never will Christ's battle be won, or His work done, till *each individual Christian* feels that *he* must rise up, and take the part allotted to him in his Saviour's cause.

But we must not speak *only* of *others*. My business is chiefly with *you*. Now, in

God's name, I demand of you to put away everything that hinders an entire surrender of your heart to God. I ask of you with all affection to give yourselves, as I desire to give myself, to Christ's blessed service. I entreat you that all your energies, your affections, aye, your very self, may from this hour be consecrated to Him who loved you, and gave Himself for you.

Now, let this subject weigh upon your mind. Do not dismiss it from your thoughts. Go, and kneel before God, with this petition on your lips, and in your heart: "O Lord, revive Thy work within my soul, in my parish, and throughout Thy Church. Quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name. Cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

## SERMON XI.

### THE BANISHED ONES RESTORED.

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2 SAMUEL XIV. 14.

“Yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him.”

To banish, or expel, a person from his country, has often been a punishment which kings and rulers have adopted. St. Paul and Barnabas were expelled from Antioch, for preaching the Gospel of Christ, as we read in Acts xiii.: “The Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their

coast." St. John, in his old age, was banished from his country by the Emperor Domitian, and was forced to pass many years alone in the solitary Isle of Patmos. And in later days Napoleon Bonaparte, a very different person, was banished from his own country, France, and compelled to pass the remainder of his days, an unhappy exile, in the island of St. Helena.

Banishment has been always looked upon as a very severe punishment, especially by those who have loved their country. To be torn away from the home which has become dear to us by ten thousand ties, to be removed far off from friends whom we love, and to be sent away as wanderers into some strange land, is indeed a painful lot. So the Jews felt it to be, when they were carried away from their own happy country, Judea, and compelled to remain as captives for seventy years in the land of Babylon. This drew from them those mournful and most touching words contained in Psalm cxxxvii; "By the waters of Babylon there we sat

down ; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion" (when we thought of our beloved home). "For there, they that carried us away captive, required of us a song. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

We have a case of this kind in the chapter before us, a case in which the person banished richly deserved his punishment. Absalom was one of King David's sons. He was treated by his royal father with every possible kindness. Every wish that he expressed was granted. And all that could make a king's son happy was within his reach. But Absalom made an ill return for his father's kindness. Not only did he disobey him, but at one time he actually dared to raise a party in the kingdom against him, and attempted to drive his own Parent from the throne. On one occasion too, feeling indignant at the conduct of his half-brother Amnon, he invited him to a feast in his house, and

then employed one of his servants to put him to death.

All this deeply pained David. After much forbearance, and trying to win him over by kindness, he was at length forced, much against his will, to treat him as a rebel, and to banish him from the kingdom. For three years therefore Absalom remained at a place called Geshur, far away from his father's family. The separation was even more painful to David than it was to his hard-hearted son. We read that "the soul of David longed to go forth unto Absalom." He longed to see him again, and to press him to his bosom. His loving heart yearned towards him. But he felt that, although his affection was strong towards this stubborn, rebellious son, he could not receive him back until his conduct was changed.

There was a person in the country, a man of considerable authority, Joab, the captain of David's army, who had a kind feeling towards Absalom, and was anxious to bring



about a reconciliation. He therefore employs a certain woman of Tekoah, to go to David, and persuade him to receive back his son. She uses a very strong argument, which at once commends itself to his heart. She sets before him the gracious conduct of God towards His sinful people. "The king (she says) doth speak this thing as one that is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished. For we must needs die, and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person"—that is to say, all men are as nothing in God's sight—they are almost beneath His notice. And then she adds, in the words of the text, "Yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him." And it seems that this argument prevailed; for we read in the 21st verse, that "the king said unto Joab, Behold, now I have done this thing; go, therefore, bring the young man Absalom again."

And now, what spiritual teaching may we gather from these words ?

First, we may see here our own condition described. We are God's banished ones. We have only to look back to the third chapter of Genesis, and we may read there the whole story, all the sad circumstances, of our banishment.

Once we were high in God's favour. We were in the full enjoyment of His love and presence. But, like Absalom, we disobeyed and rebelled against our Father. The consequence was, we were driven out of Paradise, that happy place which God had provided for us. We were expelled from His very presence. And to show the Lord's hatred against sin, and His wrath against sinners, we read that "He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Thus man was banished, exiled. He might *attempt* to return ; but Paradise was closed. There *was* the flaming sword, meeting him in

every direction. And when he looked up, he could no longer feel that God was his Friend. He had made Him his enemy. There was a something which separated him from his Father. He could no longer draw near to Him ; for God was now become as “ a consuming fire ” to his soul.

And in this hopeless state we might have remained up to the present day, cut off for ever from God, afar off, alienated from Him ; with Heaven barred and closed against us.

But is it so ? Thank God, it is not ! To use the words of the text, “ He hath devised means, that His banished be not expelled from Him.” Redemption is the greatest work that has ever been devised. See what was to be accomplished. Man had sinned, and Heaven was forfeited. But man was to be restored, pardoned, saved. Suppose God had said, “ I will pass by sin ; I will overlook it.” Would this have been Godlike ? Had He not pronounced a curse upon sin ? Had He not said, “ The soul that sinneth, it

shall die"? Well, then, could the Lord have forfeited His word? Could He have acted like a weak man, and uttered a mere threat, and then not carried it into effect? No! this would have been impossible. A great and holy God *could* not have acted thus.

Then was that wondrous plan made known, which is revealed to us in the Gospel—that mighty and glorious scheme, by which God could still remain just, and yet guilty man could be acquitted. There was this world of rebels, and yet God still loved them. His heart still went out towards His banished ones. And what did He do for them? "He spared not His own Son; but freely delivered Him up for them all." Herein was love unheard of. And not less was the love of that Son, who stepped forward, a cheerful, willing sacrifice for ruined man. It is true, we may speak of Creation as a great work, for it showed what Almighty power could do. But Redemption was *even* a greater work; for there the wis-

, love, and power of Jehovah were displayed. There we see Heaven once opened; man once more restored; a pardon offered; and yet sin most fully and fully punished, and God's grace satisfied.

But in this wonderful work of man's redemption there is one bar. Else why do not, one and all, arise and go back to our Father? He is willing. His voice utters words of the most gracious invitation. The way is open. He hath devised means for the reception of His banished ones. The work of reconciliation is complete. But one thing hinders—man is unmoved, he is content with his condition, his state of banishment gives him no uneasiness. “The divine exile hasteneth that he may be redeemed, and that he should not die in the land.” But the sinner loves his very bondage; he feels no desire to be free.”

There is an old castle in Switzerland, where a story is told of an unhappy

prisoner, who, for some crime that he was accused of against his country, was confined in a dark dungeon underground, and laden with chains. The history of his dreary imprisonment is most sad and affecting. But the most touching part of it is, that when, at the end of fourteen years, the doors of his dungeon were thrown open, no thrill of joy ran through his heart. He had been so long in darkness, that the sweet light of day was actually painful to him. Even liberty had lost its charms; and he had grown so used to his chains that he had no wish to be freed from them. They had become almost a part of himself.

Alas, alas, so it is with man, spiritually. He sighs not in his bondage. He shows no anxiety to be free. He loves his very fetters, those sins that bind him so tightly. He is willing to remain as he is, cut off from God. Christ comes, "preaching peace to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh." He "proclaims liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to

em that are bound." He sends His ambassadors with a message of mercy, invite, to beseech sinners to be conciled to God. They point to the barred gate; they direct you to the highway of return. But thousands remain unmoved: they will not come.

No; and nothing short of Divine grace can move any of us. "No man can come to me (says our Lord), except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Nay, He does draw us; and yet we struggle against Him. Who is there among us, whose heart has not at times been touched, made tender by some affliction, aroused by some feeling of danger, or melted by some sound that has pierced his soul? There was a little momentary struggle; but sin prevailed, and the world held you fast. Ah, was it not so? I am sure the conscience of more than one will testify to this. What! and will you remain banished? Will you continue at a distance from God, whilst many of your brethren have found peace in the Saviour?

Will you go on, hopelessly seeking it in the world ?

Remember, those who continue exiles here will be exiles hereafter. And what, I ask you, will it be to be banished *for ever* from the presence of the Lord ? Never more to see His face—never to hear His loving voice ! To know that the gate of Heaven is closed, eternally closed and locked against you ; and you yourselves cast out ! To hear that thrilling sentence, “Depart from Me, ye cursed : I never knew you !”

I charge you before God to examine yourself. Are you still among God’s banished ones, still a wanderer in this foreign land, with no sure resting-place ? Is Christ still an unknown Saviour ? Is God an untried Friend, as yet a stranger to you ? There is Heaven, as it were, before you. There is your gracious Father, ready to come forth and meet you. Why not say at this moment, with that banished Prodigal in the parable, “I am tired of this faithless world. I have tasted that its sin is bitter,




nd its promises deceitful, and its pleasures poor and empty. I cannot bear to live any longer away from God. I will arise and go to my Father, and say unto Him, Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son; make me as one of Thy hired servants."

How thankful should I be to know that *this was your* feeling at this moment. And how thankful *am* I to know that this *has been* the feeling of many hearts; and that there are at all events *some* who can say, 'Once we were afar off. God was our Friend, but we knew Him not. This world was our resting-place and our home. We knew of no better. But God wrought a change in us. He drew us with the cords of love. He brought us to Himself.'

And now I ask, Which do you find the happiest—your former state of banishment, or your new state of liberty and peace? Have you not already found in God's presence, in drawing near to Him, in doing

His will, a fulness of joy which words cannot describe? And does not this give you a little idea of that treasured-up joy which is before us, when we shall be with Him for ever, and see Him as He is.

Then let us go on, for a few more years it may be, bearing the trials of life, joyfully denying ourselves for our Master's sake, and meekly following His footsteps. It will be but a little while that we shall have to fight; and then will come the victory. Soon we shall drop the cross we are bearing, and take the crown. Soon our poor weak faith will be at end; and we shall behold the King in His beauty, and enjoy His unclouded presence for ever!



## A PRAYER.

O God, make us to know our true condition by reason of sin. We have cut ourselves off from Thee. We are outcasts and exiles from Thy presence. Make us not only to know this, but to feel it. May our state of banishment grieve us. May we long to be restored to Thee. May we say with the Prodigal, "I will arise, and go to my Father."

And do Thou, who art our Father, receive us back. Pity us in our lost condition ; and stretch out Thine arm of mercy towards us. Thou hast graciously devised means for our recovery. Thou hast sent Thy Son to open a way for our return. Send also, we beseech Thee, Thy Spirit into our hearts, to draw us towards Thee. Move these sluggish souls of ours by Thy grace.

Lord, it is our happiness to know Thee, and to love Thee. May we now be brought

nigh to Thee, by the blood of Christ. May we have fellowship with Thee, our Father. May we walk with Thee, day by day. And do Thou take us hereafter to be with Thee, to see Thy face, and to enjoy Thy presence for ever. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

## SERMON XII.

## CHRIST'S FAREWELL CHARGE.

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MARK XVI. 15.

and He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

THE Gospel history closes by telling us of our Lord's ascension into heaven. It was shortly before He took leave of His disciples that He spoke these words. He was now going away from them : and He calls them around Him, and gives them a solemn charge respecting their future ministry ; and all the more solemn, since these were the last commands He ever delivered on earth. And what was His direction ? "Go ye (He said) into all the world, and preach the Gospel to

every creature." And St. Mark adds, "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."

And how did the disciples act? Did they remain at Jerusalem? Did they confine their labours to that guilty city? No; as soon as the Holy Ghost had descended upon them, they went forth, proclaiming far and near salvation in the name of Christ? St. Peter left behind him many that were dear to him on the borders of the Sea of Galilee; and went up and down the country of Judea, bearing his Master's message; and then passed over into the distant country of Africa. Philip's steps were directed into Samaria; and in that country he preached Christ. Thomas, it is believed, went as far as India. His heart, which was once chilled by a momentary unbelief, now burnt with a longing desire to bring his far-off brethren to the knowledge of a Saviour. And St. Paul, who had formerly journeyed to Damascus on a very *different* errand, now travelled over sea and

land to tell men of Jesus whom he had once persecuted, and to gather, if it might be, a few stray sheep into his Master's fold. Thus, you see, they acted in the full spirit of the Lord's command, "going into all the world, and preaching the Gospel to every creature."

It would have been well if Christ's ministers ever after had followed the steps of these faithful men. But alas, after two or three hundred years, [our Lord's charge was almost forgotten. The Christian Church lost its missionary spirit. And that bold and active zeal for Christ's glory, and that holy concern for perishing souls, well nigh died away.

So it was for a lengthened period. A kind of night came upon the Christian Church. Men were asleep. They thought little about their own salvation, and felt little for that of others. Thank God, at length a brighter day dawned. About a hundred and fifty years ago Christians seemed to arouse themselves from their long slumber. They felt that they had neglected their duty. The convic-

tion came across them that their Lord's command had not been obeyed. They began to feel concerned for their fellow-men. And they at once saw the sin of quietly allowing the souls of their heathen brethren to starve, whilst their own souls had "bread enough, and to spare."

A most solemn question now came before them—a question which I want each one of us to ask himself. Ah, and it is a question which *we* have too much forgotten also. It is this; *What is my duty to the heathen?*

May God enable us to take a calm, sober, Christian view of this question, which so deeply concerns us all! And may He graciously help us in our inquiry!

What is your duty, and what is my duty to the heathen?

It has been calculated that there are at the present time about nine hundred million human beings in the world; and of these only about three hundred millions, or one-third, are professing Christians. All the rest *are either Jews, Mahomedans, or heathens;*



that is to say, they know nothing of Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of the world.

This is a painful picture, but a true one. When God looks down from His throne above upon this busy world of ours, He sees only one-third of it enlightened with the rays of the Gospel; and He sees the remaining two-thirds wrapped in heathen darkness.

And how is this? Is God's word bound? Is His mercy confined to only a few favoured nations of the earth? Did the Saviour come to save only a little portion of mankind? Was His blood not sufficient to redeem the whole? Were His wings not large enough to gather all that would seek shelter beneath them? No, brethren, "God so loved *the world* (not a part, but the whole) that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Look unto Me (He says), and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth.*"

But we have disobeyed Him. Though Christ charged us so solemnly to go into all the world, we have not gone. No; and

perhaps we have not concerned ourselves whether any went or not. In short, we have been quietly content to let our heathen brethren come into this world, and pass out of it, without making them acquainted with that gracious Saviour who came on earth to die for them.

But it may be said, that the words before us were spoken to our Lord's disciples who were then with Him, and *not to us*. Now, can we for one moment suppose that the Saviour had only them in view? Was it possible for *them* to go "*into all the world?*" Could that little handful of men bear the message of the Gospel to "*every creature?*" They might do much, and truly they did much, but they could not accomplish all that was contained in that command. Doubtless it was intended by Christ as a command to His Church in every age; and therefore it is just as much binding on you and me, in the present day, as it was on St. Peter, and St. Paul, and their brethren.

It is true, we cannot all preach the Gos-

pel. We are not all fitted for that holy work. We are not called to it. But this we are bound to do—to help it forward by every means within our reach. There is not a man with a Bible in his possession, who is not bound to think of the many habitations which that Book has never gladdened. There is not a man who has himself tasted that the Lord is gracious, that is not bound to use every effort in his power (and he can do no more) that others too may be fed with the same living food. We may not be Ministers; but we can help forward those who are. We may not be able to go ourselves; but there are those, thank God, who are ready, who have counted the cost, and are willing to leave father and mother, and home and country, that they may carry out the joyful message to those who have never heard it.

Surely then, our Lord's command is plain enough; and you see, it reaches to each one of us. And His command should be sufficient.

But there is another thing that should stir us up. It is this—*the awful state of the heathen*. There they are bowing down to stocks and stones; some worshipping graven images, made with hands; some looking upon the sun and moon as their gods; others praying to the Evil Spirit, and thinking to win his favour by offering up their sons and daughters to him.

But not only are the heathen ignorant, ignorant of God, and of that dear Saviour whom we know and love—but they are *miserable*, too.\*

We sometimes think of idolatry as though it were nothing more than a mere bending of the knee to some image of wood or stone. If this was all, it would be sad enough; but it is not all. What said the Scripture three thousand years ago? “The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.” And this testimony is as true now as it was then.

\* This, and two other passages, are taken from a sermon by the Rev. C. Bradley.

In India, and Africa, and indeed in every heathen nation, we find cruel rites and customs making the land to groan. We hear of parents exposed in their old age by their own children, to be devoured by wild beasts, or to die of hunger ; women giving themselves up willingly to be burnt to death, or forced to do so by their own relations ; men submitting to the most horrible tortures, and vainly hoping thereby to win heaven. And all this shows us that to worship idols is to make this wretched world still more wretched, to pour fresh bitterness into the cup of human woe.

And think you that the Heathen have less feeling than we have ? Are not their hearts just as much alive to sorrow and to joy as ours are ? Oh then, think of them shut out, hopelessly shut out, from all those rich consolations which you enjoy. When you are in sorrow, you have a remedy at hand. You can open your Bibles, and read there of a land where sorrow never comes, where the weary head and the

troubled heart ache no more. When wearied and burdened, you can think of the love and power of an ever-present Helper, and find rest to your souls. When conscience smites, you can fly to the Redeemer, whose blood "cleanseth from all sin," and make His salvation your hope and joy. But what can the heathen do? Cannot they feel and suffer? Cannot their hearts sink as low, and ache as bitterly as yours? And yet the Gospel which comforts *you*, speaks no peace to *them*. It has never lightened a single burden for them, never dried a single tear, never taken out one sting from a guilty conscience, never cheered one dying bed. Oh, my friends, brethren and companions in a path of tribulation, how can we enjoy the quieting, the sweet, the heavenly consolations of Christ, and not wish to make them known through a suffering world? How can we at times be happy in God, and yet be content to leave millions of our fellow pilgrims groaning in unpitied wretchedness?

And here unbelief comes in with an argument to stop us. Worldly men will tell us *the work is too difficult*, that we cannot accomplish it, that it is folly to attempt it. They laugh at the idea of converting the heathen world. And if we judge as they judge, if we set aside the power and promises of God, then we must admit the force of their objection; we must join with them in saying, it is useless, it is enthusiastic, it is to a very height of folly, to attempt the conversion of six hundred millions of idol-shippers by the preaching of a few simple men; we might as well employ as many worms to level the hills of the earth. But we dare not judge as these men judge. We dare not, we cannot, set aside the power and promises of God. We cannot forget that we have God's command to act upon, and God's promise to cheer us. This great and blessed work will never be brought out by man's power and might alone, but *by my Spirit, saith the Lord.*" The world may count it folly; but is it not written, that

“the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men;” and that “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty?” No matter what country a man belongs to, whether he be an untutored savage in one of the South Sea Islands, or a civilized inhabitant of this country; whether he be a dark-skinned African, or a free-born European; there is the same message for every one, and the same method devised for his conversion—“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them which believe.”

And let me ask one simple question; What would have been the state of this very land of ours, if those missionaries who came and preached the Gospel to our savage forefathers, had reasoned as worldly men reason now, and had set aside Christ’s command, and Christ’s promises? We might at this very hour have been offering up our sons *and* our daughters to devils. And what too



have been the state of the whole had the fishermen of Galilee, and the maker of Tarsus, reasoned thus? No man reason thus, who heartily believes word. He will learn from that sacred that "nothing is too hard for the

His faith will lift him up above the ings, and fears, and objections, of a world, and of his own selfish heart. d of looking at difficulties, he will t the uplifted arm of Jehovah, and in rength he will face them all.

sh has already been done in the last ears, much is doing now, but much ow much!) yet remains to be done. ns are yet in darkness, and these as are rapidly moving off into another

It has been estimated, that thirty ns are *every minute* passing into ty! And how awful is this fact, when ear in mind our Saviour's words, at shall a man give in exchange for al?"

d it is to us Christians, and especially

to us in England, that the Heathen are looking for the bread of life. To us it has been liberally given. May it not be indeed said of us, "Freely ye have received, freely give!" How great, how noble, how blessed the object! It is to save immortal beings, for whom Christ died. It is for eternity, and no time must be lost; for the night is soon coming when no man can work.

I have endeavoured to state our duty to the heathen, the duty of the Christian Church. Now, if the spiritual welfare of your brother interests you, if you can feel for those poor outcasts whom your eyes have never seen, and if I have led you to the conclusion that you have a duty to discharge towards them, then do not let the matter rest here. Say to yourself, Cannot I do something, ever so little, to bring my poor heathen brethren to the knowledge of a Saviour?

In conclusion, let me remind you of this, that preaching is necessary to convert men's *souls*, and that missionaries are necessary to

as the bearers of Christ's message; how can the Heathen "believe in Him whom they have not heard? and how can they hear without a preacher? And shall they preach except they be sent? It is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, bringing glad tidings of good things."

Will we then be content to leave them? Shall we leave them in their sins, and give no voice to direct them to the Lamb of God that *taketh away* those sins? How can it be with ourselves? If we were alone, we should perish. Nay more, when we are not left alone, when we are called, and invited, and encouraged, when the conscience checks, and God calls, and ministers exhort, and friends weep, all is too often in vain. The truth is this, the work is not our work, though He employs man as His instrument. We may teach, we may alarm, we cannot change the heart. Call into the world that congregation the most powerful ever that ever named the name of Christ.

—place in the pulpit the eloquent Apollos, or the fervent Paul—nay, bring down from heaven the loftiest archangel, he would be no more able to give spiritual life to any one soul, than he is to raise the dead from their graves around us. It matters not where that soul be found, in Christian England, or in heathen India. He only who made it at first, can create it anew.

Then is not our duty plain? God's Word must be preached to the heathen. We must send out missionaries to them, faithful, devoted, earnest men, who desire to win souls, and we must follow them with our prayers. Whilst they are bearing the burden and heat of the day, and are sowing the Gospel seed, we must pray to God to cheer their hearts, to strengthen their faith, and to bless their labours; so that they may turn many "from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

## SERMON XIII.

## THE GOOD PURCHASE.

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PROVERBS XXIII. 23.

“Buy the truth, and sell it not.”

WHAT was a very important question which late asked our Lord, when He stood before him to be judged—“What is truth?” It is a most important question for Pilate, and most important for us too. There is so much falsehood in the world, there are so many false ways into which a man may be led, that it is of the greatest moment we

should clearly satisfy ourselves as to "What is truth?"

When there is any matter which concerns us deeply, as regards our worldly affairs—for instance, the inheritance of an estate—we are anxious to find some writings, some documents, some records, some word, on which we can thoroughly depend.

Now, as regards our future inheritance, the salvation of our immortal souls, there need be no doubt or uncertainty. God has been pleased to reveal to us His own blessed truth in the Gospel. "This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and that life is in His Son." Here is a great and glorious truth, on which we may rest. Other truths there are, but this is the greatest, the most precious of all, that the Son of God hath purchased an eternal life for man; and that through Him alone it can be obtained.

And yet how few can receive this great but simple truth in all its fulness, can lay

hold of it and make it theirs, and can rejoice in it with thankfulness. It is easy to talk about the truth. It is easy enough to pass judgment, and say, "This man holds the truth," or "That minister preaches the truth." But how hard to realize it ourselves, to live upon it, and possess it as a treasure laid up within our very soul.

May God Himself, the Spirit of truth, reveal His truth to each of us; and grant us each day to know more of it, and to walk in it more consistently!

But let us now listen to Solomon's advice in the text. "Buy the truth, and sell it not."

"Buy the truth." Then it is to be bought. And yet how utterly unlike worldly things—bought without money! For you remember those words of Isaiah, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath *no money*; come ye, buy wine and milk *without money and without*

Salvation is offered to us freely. It is a gift. "The gift of God is eternal life." "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is *the gift of God.*"

Man can never purchase it with gold, or by any merit or goodness of his; but God in His great love bestows it. And yet, in one sense we must still buy it. Look at our Lord's words in Revelation iii. 17; "Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, I counsel thee *to buy* of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." Again, look at those two striking parables in Matthew xiii. Our Lord says, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and *buyeth* that field." "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he



had, and *bought* it." And what is that "hid treasure," and that "pearl of great price?" It is Gospel truth. And so Solomon in our text says, "Buy it"—"Buy the truth."


Now, how can we do this? What are we to learn from this expression?

We may learn this, that if we really desire to possess God's truth, we must *seek it with earnestness*. The knowledge of God is not to be gained in a moment. The sinner, when his heart is turned to the Lord, has much to learn, and much to unlearn. He has to become acquainted with the depths of his own heart; and these are not to be discovered in a day. He has to search the Scriptures with much prayer for God's teaching; and then it is by degrees that the light of God's truth is received into his soul. Ray after ray comes beaming in upon him; and thus at length his soul becomes enlightened.

Are you thus striving to become ac-

quainted with Christ, and with the precious doctrines of His Gospel? Do you daily pray, "What I know not teach Thou me"? Are you content to be a humble learner in the school of Christ, not fancying that you know more than those about you, and that your lesson is already learnt; but feeling each day how little you know, and earnestly desiring to be made wiser and better?

What pains men take to acquire human learning! How they strain every nerve to buy it! And yet, after all, how very little is to be gained by it! Oh, how will men one day grieve that they were so taken up with the search after earthly knowledge! How will they wish that they had read the newspaper less, and their Bible more—that with all their getting, they had got understanding—that with all their knowledge, they had become acquainted with a Saviour, "whom to know is everlasting life!"



It is not enough however to seek after the truth with earnestness; we must seek it also with *steady perseverance*. Some we see taking up religion by fits and starts. They are warm to-day, and then cold again to-morrow. A sermon moves them, and they seem to feel, deeply perhaps, but soon the world comes with its deadening power, and their convictions of sin and their longings after Christ are forgotten. The good seed is choked. Such persons are always feeling, but never growing in grace; always hopeful, but never decided. They are easily aroused, "but never come to the knowledge of the truth."

Do not trust to such movings of the heart. It is a very happy thing when a man's heart begins to feel. But then the work must *go on*. A steady, bold, decided course is necessary, if we would "buy the truth."

But further, we must be ready to pay the price of *suffering* for it. We must be

willing to bear reproach, to deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily. We must be ready to face difficulties, and even danger, if needs be.

Nicodemus was anxious to know the truth, and to "buy it." He felt that he could obtain all that he needed from Christ. He longed to converse with our Lord. But then he knew that the Jews were on the watch for him. He dared not go to the Saviour in the broad daylight; so he went at night, feeling sure that if the Jews discovered him they would cast him out of the synagogue, and perhaps take away his life. Still he went. He felt as if he must go; for he was anxious about his soul. And his reward was, that he became "wise unto salvation."

Are we afraid of suffering, afraid of self-denial, afraid of difficulties? Do we tremble at the world's scorn, and shrink from a little pain and toil? We see clearly perhaps the path of duty; but we do not walk

it, because it will cost us something. Our heart wavers; we doubt; and it ends in our choosing the easiest, but not the best and happiest, road.

Ah, this is the reason why we are not walking in the truth, and rejoicing in it. We lead too easy a life. We are too cold and cowardly. There is too much of the world about us, and too little of that earnestness, and earnestness, and boldness, which belong to the faithful soldier of Christ. And thus it is that many of us go on for years, without getting forward; sit poor feeble Christians at best, *knowing something* of the truth and yet never *really assessing* it, *giving something* for it but *not giving all*.

Such is the case with many Christians. But there are some blessed exceptions. There are some, who have counted all else at loss that they might win Christ. They have paid dearly for their treasure, but not beyond its value; for they feel this,

that if only they possess Christ, they possess all.

But not only does our text tell us to “buy the truth ; but it adds, “*Sell it not.*” Having bought it, do not part with it. Would the man in the parable, who found the treasure, have sold it for a trifle ? And yet how many do so as regards their souls ! Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Demas sold all his hopes, that he might enjoy the world. Judas sold Him, who was Himself the Truth, for thirty pieces of silver. And what shall we say more ? Are there not thousands every day who sell the truth, who sell it for pleasure, for riches, for the good opinion of the world ?

Are there no Esaus among ourselves ? none like Demas and Judas ? Are there none, to whom our Lord might well utter the rebuke which He addresses to the Ephesians, “Nevertheless, I have somewhat against

e, because thou hast left thy first love" ?  
 e there none, to whom we might say  
 h sorrow, "Ye did run well;" you once  
 med to be under the power of religion;  
 ur heart once appeared to be opened.  
 ere was a time, when the Saviour was  
 cious to you, and your face was set  
 nward. You had deep convictions, great  
 derness of heart, and an earnest wish to  
 e a holy life. But all this is past. And  
 v your heart is cold, and dull, and un-  
 ling. What a painful change! Alas,  
 s, you have "*sold the truth!*" and with  
 I am very sure you have sold all your  
 ce! That is an awful word of Solomon's,  
 he backslider in heart shall be filled with  
 own ways."

A backsliding state is a most fearful one.  
 ave known the way of truth, and then  
 depart from it—to have tasted of the  
 venly gift, and then to fall away—to  
 e loved the Saviour, and then to grow  
 less and cold towards Him—is sad in-

deed. But we do not say that it is a hopeless state. God forbid! The stain of sin may be very deep; but we dare not say that it is too deep for the blood of Christ to wash it out. We remember that gracious promise, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

But let me speak a word to those who know God, and are patiently and steadily walking in His ways. To you God's truth is most precious. It has revealed to you your sinfulness; and it has also disclosed to you the remedy for sin. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no one take thy crown." *Sell it not.* Cling to it, and part not with it at any price. Take for your encouragement the example of Christ's devoted martyrs—those blessed men, for instance, in our Church, and in our own country, who three hundred years ago fought so valiantly for the truth—who were



ling to suffer cheerfully, and to be cast into  
 son with death staring them in the face.  
 and yet, when tempted to sell their treasure,  
 ay boldly refused, and chose rather to die,  
 d have their portion with their Lord.  
 ek for the same grace that so mightily  
 engthened them. Pray that you also  
 y be found faithful, "a good soldier  
 Jesus Christ," willing to "endure  
 rdness." Surely the weakest of us might  
 come strong, if we did but rest on His  
 n, who is strength itself! And how  
 ould all the difficulties and hindrances,  
 ick seem now to be blocking up our  
 th, be removed, if we could simply lift up  
 e eye of faith to Him who says to His  
 ople, "As thy days, so shall thy strength  
 ."

"Buy the truth," if you have not already  
 ade it yours. If it cost you *labour*, buy

If you must pay the price of *suffer-*  
 7 for it, buy it. If it cost you your *life*,

buy it. Do not pause and hesitate. You must have it *now*, or perhaps never. It may soon be out of your reach. Use all earnestness. Heaven must be taken by force. Escape for thy life. Look not behind thee. Flee to Christ as your only abiding shelter. Seek to win Him. Be not satisfied, until you have good ground for believing that He is yours. There may be toils and difficulties, but God will be with you; and He says unto you, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life!"

Happy those who know the truth of God, who possess it, and who are living upon the enjoyment of it! It is not enough to have it stored up in our *heads*. We must have it rooted and embedded in our *hearts*. It has been outwardly revealed to us in the Scripture. But a yet further revelation is necessary. It must be also inwardly revealed to our souls by the teaching of the

y Spirit. He is called "the Spirit of h;" and He is able to "lead us into all h," and to "take of the things of Christ show them to us."

And sure I am that if the truth has been made known to our souls—if we once grasped it firmly, and felt its power within—we shall not easily be induced to let go our hold of it. Still we must be in mind that we are in God's keeping, not in our own. And who is there among us, that may not in an hour of weakness be led aside out of the strait road to some path of error?

Let us be thankful then that there is a stronger arm than ours which holds us, a better wisdom than our own, and a better strength, on which we may rely. Let us trust ourselves, and seek God's grace, which alone can build us up in His truth, and keep us from those many false ways which stand open to receive us.

May we be strong in the Lord's strength,

wise in His wisdom, and safe through  
His keeping. Under His wings may we  
ever trust, and may His truth be our shield  
and buckler !

## SERMON XIV.

A CLUSTER OF PROMISES FOR GOD'S  
PEOPLE.

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PSALM XCI. 1.

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High  
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

If you were to find yourself in a garden on some sultry day, and were to see hanging around you on every side bunches of the most delicious fruit, you would naturally ask yourself, Whose is this refreshing food? Whose property is it? To whom does it belong? Whose privilege is it to gather it, and to eat it?

Now, the Bible is stored with very precious promises. It is full of fruit, that

can nourish and refresh our souls. In every page of it there is some sweet word of encouragement for the weary, something to cheer and strengthen us by the way. And I know not where these promises hang in such thick clusters, as in the Psalm before us. There is a separate promise in every verse. May we have eyes to see them, and hearts to taste their richness! But first let us ask, To whom are these promises made? To whom do they belong? Whose privilege is it to gather them, and to call them his own?

Now remember this—the precepts and the invitations of the Bible are for *all*; the threatenings and the curses of the Bible are for *the wicked*; but the promises and blessings of the Bible are only for *God's people*. They only have any grounds for taking them to themselves. They only, as we are told in the Book of Revelation, “have a right to the tree of life.”

We shall be able, I think, to discover from two or three expressions in this Psalm

sort of persons to whom the promises  
re us are made.

he very opening of the Psalm tells us

“He that dwelleth in the secret place  
he Most High;” that is, the man who  
taken the Lord as his portion, who has  
en Him as his guardian, and finds in  
all that he needs or can desire. To  
the world is as a wilderness. He finds  
rest in it. But he is at home in God.  
re he reposes, and enjoys peace. He  
a life of communion with the Lord.

uch was David’s state; for he himself  
us in the second verse, “I will say of  
Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress;  
God; in Him will I trust.” David  
e from experience; he had been led to  
to God as his hiding-place, and he felt  
y under His sheltering care.

en, in verse 14, we have a further  
ription of the person to whom these  
ises are given; “He hath set his love  
me.” How few there are who answer  
description! Many love God a little,

but they love the world *more*. Many feel that they love God *at times*. But this is not the person described here; "He hath *set* his love upon me." His heart is fixed. He loves God supremely. He can say with truth, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee."

We shall see one more feature in this holy character, mentioned in verse 15, "He shall call upon Me." He is one then who prays. He calls upon God. And this is a mark which always distinguishes God's people from others. A man may know but little; his views may as yet be very confused; he may see Christ but very dimly; his faith may be weak and small, as a grain of mustard seed; and yet he may be a child of God, there may be grace in his heart. Can it be said of him, "Behold, he prayeth"? If so, then that is the surest of all marks. His faith is certain to grow stronger. Fresh knowledge will be given him. In short, all will be well, if only he is a man of prayer.



Thus then it is clear that the promises in the Psalm before us, just like all the other promises in the Bible, are made to *the Believer*. He may take them to himself. He may seize hold of them, and exclaim, *They are, every one of them, my portion.*

And now for the promises themselves. Let us gather a few of them, and examine them a little closely.

FIRST, here is an assurance that the Lord will *undertake the cause of His people*. He keeps them under His own peculiar care. To a certain degree God takes *all* under His care. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Heavenly Father. But His own people are specially dear to Him. He here promises (verse 1) that each one of them “shall abide under His shadow.” And again, it is promised in verse 4, “He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”

How secure may a child of God feel with

this comforting promise before him ! He well knows the many dangers to which he is daily and hourly exposed. And he knows too that neither any foresight of his own, nor the most powerful earthly protection, can ensure his safety. But what if he can feel that "the Almighty God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms?" What if he knows that he is in better keeping than his own, that there is an unseen eye watching him, an unseen hand directing him, and an unseen power engaged in his behalf? This was David's feeling, when he went out against Goliath. This was Gideon's feeling, when he and his three hundred soldiers stood before thirty thousand of the Midianites. This was Daniel's feeling, when he found himself alone and unarmed in the den of lions.

Do you know anything of this firm assurance, this childlike confidence in the fatherly care of God, which leads us to feel that both our bodies and our souls are safe in His hands? Happy those who have com-

mitted all to Him, and can leave all in His care, without one single feeling of distrust. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon Thee."

But we must not dwell here. The next promise to which I must call your attention, is a promise of *deliverance in times of special danger*. The first promise was general; this is more particular—"Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee,

neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."

How are we to take this? Am I to believe that God will free me from all trouble, and keep me clear of all sickness, and never allow me to meet with a single accident which befalls other men? Is the Christian to lead a sort of charmed life, and be altogether without those trials to which all are subject? Certainly not. He is cut down with fever like others. He, too, must pay the sure penalty of death. Was not St. Peter cast into prison? And was not St. Paul shipwrecked? And were not Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, thrown into the furnace? Aye, and did not Stephen actually die under the hands of his murderers? And yet this promise was true in their case. God was still their Deliverer. They were not alarmed when danger and death stared them in the face. They were "not afraid of the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day."

We have read perhaps the account of five

voted missionaries who were lost in a distant part of South America. They were cut off from all intercourse with their fellow-men, and were literally starved to death. It is told that as their provisions slowly dwindled, and as they found their poor weak bodies gradually sinking, they were patient, submissive, and even happy. To them, "to live was Christ, to die was gain." They felt the near presence of the Lord supporting them. They knew, they believed, they were assured, that He was with them. They were "safe under His wings;" and that death, which is such a terror to the ungodly, seemed not to come near them. Death had lost all its sting and power.

And so too in our every day life, may not every child of God claim his Father's protection? May he not feel that the Lord is indeed about his path by day, and about his bed by night—that all things are working together for his good—and that not a single hair of his head can be touched

without God's permission? What a happy thing to be able to lift up one's heart to God, and say, "My times are in Thy hands"—my life, my health, my family, my dwelling, my property, all my earthly concerns, and above all the still more important concerns of my soul, all are in Thy hands—all are safe in thy keeping—"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Worldly men know not God. But the Christian walks by faith, as "seeing Him who is invisible." Worldly men have no almighty arm on which to rest when burdened with affliction; no constant Friend with whom they may hold converse in the hour of solitude; and no unfailing Refuge in all the many changes and chances of this mortal life. But the child of God has. Instead of looking to a cold and unfeeling world for comfort and support, his eyes are continually directed to a Saviour, who is *both* able and willing to help in every time

of need. This makes him fearless in danger, patient in suffering, thankful for every mercy, and prepared for every trial. Such promises as those before us are his stay and his support.

But observe, the Psalmist not only assures us here that God is our Guardian, but he also tells us whom he has charged to watch over us—"He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet;" that is, however great your danger may be, however fearful your enemies, so long as you are in the path of duty, God will be your shield.

This was fulfilled to the very letter in Daniel's case; the lions did not hurt him: and in David's own case too. And this was fulfilled to the letter in St. Paul's case, when in the island of Melita he took up the venomous viper, and it hurt him not. And

this is fulfilled *spiritually* every day, in the case of God's servants, when they are enabled by His help to resist and overcome that great enemy of their souls, who is spoken of as "a roaring lion" and as the "old serpent."

There is something very delightful in the thought, that God puts us under the guardianship of His angels. They are commissioned to watch, not only over the Church generally, but over every particular Believer. Doubtless, those unseen protectors guard us in ways that we know not of, and defend us from unnumbered dangers. "Are they not," says the Apostle, "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation?"

But there is one more promise, or rather one more class of promises, of which I shall say a few words in conclusion.

To crown the whole, the Psalm winds up with a promise of *honour and salvation* to God's people. "I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. I will



deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." What can we want more? It is not this world's honour that we need to make us happy. If we get it, we find out that it is but a poor unsatisfying thing; it only disappoints us. Mere deliverance too is not all we want.

No, there is something better than all this. To be honoured by God, to be owned as His servant, to have His approval, this is what we sigh for—to hear those words of welcome, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." To get salvation for our souls, to be pardoned and accepted—to live an endless life with God—this is the prize we Christians are striving for. Nothing less than this will satisfy us. And all this is promised in the closing words of the Psalm, "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation."

A long life here on earth is what numbers are wishing for. And yet it is often

only a lengthening out of our sorrows. But our days will be bright and happy ones, if God cheers us with His presence. This is the Believer's joy—to have Christ with him. When he is without this, he longs for it; when he tastes a little of it, he longs for more; and when he has much of it, he is anxious to keep it. But he cannot always do so. His faith too often fails, and he loses his comfort. There may be a clear sky to-day; but how quickly the weather may change, and the clouds shut out the sun. But it will not always be so. Soon God's dear children will be with Him. Soon they will reach their home. And there they will be for ever with their Lord. They will stand in His presence. They will hear His words. They will see Him as He is. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

the Lamb which is in the midst of  
 throne shall feed them, and shall lead  
 m unto living fountains of waters: and  
 l shall wipe away all tears from their  
 s."

For ever to behold Him shine,  
 For evermore to call Him mine,  
     And see Him still before me;  
 For ever on His face to gaze,  
 And meet His full assembled rays,  
 While all the Father He displays  
     To all the saints in glory!

Not all things else are half so dear  
 As His delightful presence here:  
     What must it be in heaven!  
 'Tis heaven on earth to hear Him say,  
 As now I journey day by day,  
 "Poor sinner, cast thy fears away;  
     Thy sins are all forgiven."

But how must His celestial voice  
 Make my enraptur'd heart rejoice,  
     Where I in glory hear Him!  
 While I before the heavenly gate  
 For everlasting entrance wait,  
 And Jesus on His throne of state  
     Invites me to come near Him.

“Come in, thou blessed, sit by me ;  
With my own life I ransom'd thee ;  
Come taste my perfect favour :  
Come in, thou happy spirit, come ;  
Thou now shalt dwell with me at home ;  
Ye blissful mansions, make him room,  
For he must stay for ever.”

## SERMON XV.

## BELIEVING PRAYER.

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MATTHEW XXI. 22.

things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

of the promises of the Bible are so and full, that they almost take us by surprise, and we are hardly able to receive without a certain degree of allowance. seem to think that they are too great to be. Now this is a wrong feeling; for the Lord promises He will perform, and to the very letter too. There is nothing however that we must remember, namely, that one part of God's word is needed to throw light upon another before we can see its full and complete meaning.

Let us see how this bears upon the verse which I have read to you. Here our Lord says, that "whatsoever we shall ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive." And is not this a glorious promise? Observe, Christ does not say, "What ye shall ask for, *perhaps* ye shall receive." He does not merely say, "*Some* things that you pray for shall be granted to you." No; He declares that "*all* things, *whatsoever* ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Well then, some one will say, I will try if this promise will come true. I am a poor man; I will ask that my condition may be instantly changed, and that I may become rich. Or, I am sick, and I will beg of God to bestow upon me perfect health. If God is true to His word, He will grant my petition.

And would it be right to come to this conclusion? Would it not be turning one of our Lord's most precious promises to a bad account? Happily He has guarded us against such a mistake, for He has told us in another place, that "if we ask anything

*according to His will*, He heareth us." Then what we ask for, and our way of asking, must be *according to His will*. You want riches, or you want health: but if God sees that they are not good for you, if, according to His wise judgment, poverty is better for you, or sickness more conducive to your soul's welfare, then is it not a proof of His mercy and His goodness, that He should deny your petition?

Now then, with the light of this other passage of Scripture, how shall we read the promise before us? It comes to this—"All things" (that is, all *lawful* things) "whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer" (if they be according to *His will*, and if they have *His approval*), "ye shall receive."

Who would have it otherwise? See here the wisdom and love and mercy of God. Would a father give his child what he knows to be hurtful, merely for his crying for it? No; and so will God deal with His children; and sure I am, that there is not a child of God who, if he had his choice,

would have one single word of this gracious promise altered. Oh, how perplexed we should be, and what trouble we should often bring ourselves into, if God left the whole matter in our hands, and allowed us to ask for just what pleased us, instead of putting in the kind proviso, that it must be according to His will !

Having now explained to you this promise, and having guarded you against mistaking it, or making a wrong use of it, let us look into it as it here stands.

And first we see here *the nature of prayer*. What is prayer? Is it repeating over a certain number of words which we have learnt by heart, and fancying that the mere utterance of this string of words will do any good? Is it coming to church, and sitting and listening whilst your minister speaks to God, as if you had nothing to do with what is going on? Is this prayer? Assuredly not. It is something more than *this*. "Whatsoever ye shall *ask* in prayer,"



says our text. It is *asking* for something. It is drawing near to God, and begging and entreating Him to give you something. It is speaking to our Lord who is out of sight, just as if He stood before us. And no man ever yet prayed aright, who did not feel himself to be a needy, helpless creature, and God an almighty and gracious Giver.

A sense of want is the very soul of prayer. There is no such thing as prayer without it. We cannot ask in earnest for that which we do not need. It is the hungry man, that begs for food; the sick man, that longs for health; the wounded man, who desires to have his bleeding sores bound up. There is more of real prayer in the groan of a heavy heart, which says, "Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me," than there is in a whole volume of words uttered without a sense of need.

It is fearful to think that there are some who never pray. They never kneel down before God. They never confess their sins to Him. They never ask for forgiveness.

Not a word of thankfulness for all His mercies ever proceeds from their mouth. If you are such a person, if from your lips no prayer came forth this morning, no prayer yesterday, and perhaps no prayer all the week, I would tell you that it is owing to God's sparing mercy alone that you are alive at this moment. You deserve to die, for you have been living absolutely without God. And, Oh, if you had died in this state, where would your soul have gone? Why, to that place where there are sounds of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, but where the voice of prayer is never heard.

But it may be that you have knelt down; you have drawn near to God with your lips; you have made a show of prayer. But it has been a mere lip service; there has been no heart work in it, no earnestness, and therefore no enjoyment in it, and no comfort from it. Your words have been like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

I want you to see, that to pray is more than this; that there is something real

about true prayer; that the man who feels deeply *must* pray; he cannot live without it.

There is one word in our text which makes prayer to be prayer. I mean the word "believing:" "whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*." Here is the great secret of prayer. Why, if we don't believe, how can we pray? If you went to a house, and saw written over the door that no one was at home, would you knock? No; it is because you believe that some one is at home, that you do knock; and it is because you know that there is some one to give, that you do ask. And so it is when we pray. Why are our prayers so cold, and poor, and feeble? It is because we pray without faith. Why do we feel nothing of God's presence, and why do we so often get up from our knees with the feeling that we have been speaking to One who does not hear us? It is because we have no faith. If we believed with the heart, we should pray with the heart also.

And think what encouragement we take from these gracious words before. Suppose a person is really desirous to obtain heavenly blessings, what a boundless promise there is here for him to rely upon! How wide the grant is—"soever ye ask!" It reaches to every thing we can want for life or godliness, for this world or eternity. There is nothing too good for God to give us: there is nothing too small for us to carry to Him—the cares of our families, the daily troubles of our lives, those little harassing trials which persecute and vex us, and put us out of temper. Nothing is too small to carry to Him who has said, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." St. Paul says, "He that hath not His own Son, but hath freely given up His only-begotten Son for us all, how will He not with Him also freely give us all things?" What an encouragement is this! What can He deny us who has already given us His Son? He says to us, "Ask what I shall give thee." "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

“If thou canst believe: all things are possible to him that believeth.” We are not straitened in God, but in our own narrow, unbelieving, little-expecting hearts.

The Apostle says, “All things are yours.” And again our Lord declares, “Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” And St. Mark gives the very promise we are now considering, though in somewhat different words; “Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

This then I learn from our text; that there is nothing my God will deny me that is for my good. I may ask, and ask on, and shall never come to the end of what He has to give me. There are blessings, the richest and most abundant blessings, treasured up for me in heaven, and ready to be showered down upon me. And I have only to send

up faith as the messenger, and they will become mine.

Oh that there was more of the spirit of prayer among us ! Oh that we could each one say, "I know its value, for I have myself experienced it !" Then we should be holier Christians. There would be more depth in our religion. There would be more growth and we should take greater strides toward heaven. We should not have to complain so much of our weakness and coldness ; but our language would be rather that of triumph and of praise. It is a good sign when a praying spirit shows itself among a household, or a congregation. It was the want of this that made the Prophet mourn, "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." May the Lord graciously pour out upon us the spirit of prayer and supplication ; that we may be something more than mere hearers of His word ; something more than mere talkers about religion ; that we may each one of us

make earnest application to God Himself to bestow that grace upon us, and those gifts which our souls need.

There are two or three particulars connected with prayer, with which I shall now conclude my sermon.

This is a question you may be inclined to ask—*How often* should a Christian man pray? If you mean, How often should he kneel down and engage in regular prayer? I would answer, No man will make his stated seasons for prayer fewer than twice a day. This is the least that any one will think of, who calls himself a servant of Christ. He will kneel down before his heavenly Father morning and evening, and put himself in His presence. He will then tell out his wants, and pray to have them relieved. He may either use a form of prayer on these occasions, or such words as come into his mind at the moment. But, whichever method he adopts, his heart must go along with his words. These will be solemn times.

with him, times of blessing, when his soul will be refreshed from above.

But I believe that most earnest Christians feel that twice a day is too little for this holy exercise. They feel it good, if they are able, to retire from the world *at noon* also, and pour out their hearts to the Lord. David evidently adopted this practice; for he says in Psalm lv., "Evening, and morning, and *at noon*, will I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice." And when he woke up in the silence of the night, prayer was his relief, and God was his companion and his comforter. Daniel too, though he knew that it would call forth the wrath and scoffing of enemies, "went into his house, and kneeled upon his knees *three times a day*, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God." And St. Paul goes further still; he exhorts us to "*pray without ceasing*." Do you know from your own experience what this means? Do you know the comfort of being in a prayerful frame all the day, of secretly lifting up your heart to God, and holding on by Him,



s it were, every step of your dangerous journey? Do you know what it is to feel that He is very near to you, and to apply to Him at any moment to be with you, breathing out, it may be only a short word or two, but those words from your inmost heart? This is "uneasing prayer." This is walking with God, and holding constant intercourse with Him who is unseen. I ask you, are any of you living this life of prayer, this hidden life of faith? It is the life that St. Paul lived, and all the holy men of old. It is the life that all those are now living, who are "growing in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour."

And the question may be asked, What ought we to do when *we feel no inclination for prayer*? There are times, when even a child of God finds that his tongue is tied, and his heart is heavy; he is in no frame for prayer. What should he do? Should he put it by, till he is in a better frame? Surely not; this would be giving place to our

great enemy. This would be giving up the race we are running. When we feel this palsy (for it is a kind of palsy of the soul) we should say to ourselves, "I am sick: I have this sad numbing disease, which I inherit as a child of Adam; a cold chill has come over my soul; I must go at once to the great Physician." Then we should kneel down and pray to God for the spirit of prayer. We should ask God to remove the coldness and langour from our souls. We might use the words of David, and say, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust, quicken me, O Lord, according to Thy word." And who knows, but that prayer thus offered up, though with a great deal of effort, may be even more blessed, and be even more acceptable to God, than those prayers which are put up with much more ease and fluency? God knows well our trials and weakness; He marks our struggles, and blesses our efforts.

*Let me say to you in conclusion, If you*

desire to become a man of prayer, be not discouraged by difficulties. Be sure Satan will throw them in your way; but God's grace is sufficient for you.

You will find it difficult perhaps *to get time for prayer*. Oh, make time for it, if you value your soul's health.

Some of you too find a difficulty from having no *quiet place to pray in*, where you can be alone. This certainly is a serious disadvantage. But it is a comfort to think that God knows all your circumstances, and He will accept the best offering you can make to Him.

Again, there may be another who feels the importance of prayer, and longs to draw near to his Father who is in secret; but those whom he is living with may oppose him, may ridicule him, and try to thwart him, and he has scarcely courage to meet their scorn. If God has put this desire into your heart, happy is it for you. And let me urge you, cost what it may, to act upon it. God watches your difficulties, and your con-

duct under them. And will He not (thou) in one moment either remove them if He sees it better, enable you by His grace to bear up against them?

There are many more points which I should like to mention. But I propose to continue this subject in my next sermon. Meanwhile, may the advice which has been given be acted upon by us all! And may we remember the gracious promise in the text, which the Lord hath given for our encouragement!

## SERMON XVI.

## PRAYER FOR OTHERS.\*

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 JAMES V. 16.

“Pray one for another.”

In my last Sermon I spoke to you about prayer. I showed you what real prayer is—that we must feel our wants; that we must pray in faith; and that the Lord promises to give us, not *some* things, but *all* things that we ask for, believing—with this single proviso, namely, that they are good for us.

\* See a valuable little book on Intercessory Prayer, G. W. Mylne, Esq., from which much in this Sermon has been borrowed.

Have you yet learned to pray? Blessed was that day when you first saw your need of prayer. Blessed was that friend who first taught you, or that sermon that first aroused you to see, that the gate of Heaven can only be unlocked by prayer. Blessed was that illness, or that trial, that first brought you on your knees. The sharpest affliction, the bitterest distress, hard as it may be to bear, was a blessing, if only it stirred up in you a spirit of prayer.

But in my last sermon I spoke only about praying for ourselves. I wish now to say a little about Intercessory Prayer, or Prayer for others, and also about Answers to Prayer.

And, first, let me speak of *Intercessory Prayer*, or Prayer for others.

Can there be any doubt, that to pray for others is according to the will of God? To speak to our heavenly Father about those in whom we are interested; to lay their wants before Him; to plead for them with all earnestness—this is the Christian's duty and privilege. St. John tells us (in

1 John v. 16) that "if any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, *he shall ask*, and God shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." "I exhort therefore (says St. Paul, in 1 Tim. ii.), that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." And St. James (in the verse before us) exhorts us to "pray one for another; for," he adds, "the prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

So you see that Scripture attaches no small importance to the prayers of one Christian for his brother. And surely, if we are members of one family, if we have a feeling for one another, and if the souls of our fellow-men are precious in our sight, it will lead us to bring *their* cases before God, as well as our own.

Let us take a few cases. We hear of a brother falling into sin, some Christian brother of whom we thought well. In an evil hour Satan has overcome him, and he has fallen. Our first inclination oftentimes

is to talk about it, and to speak harshly of his conduct, forgetting perhaps the Apostle's advice, that "if a man be overtaken in a fault, we should restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted." How much happier it would be, if the sins of others always sent us to the throne of grace! What a different feeling would be produced upon our minds, upon hearing the report of any great crime, if we always made it the occasion of prayer for our guilty fellow-creatures! How much more profitable it would be, if, instead of merely speaking of the evil that we see and hear around us, it stirred us up to earnest supplication that God would check it and remove it, and show men the sinfulness of their ways! It is beautiful to observe the conduct of Ezra, as described in the ninth chapter of that book. A report is brought to him that his people, the Jews, had broken the laws of God. He expresses his bitter grief at the *intelligence* in the third verse; "And when I



heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished." And what did he do then? Did he instantly break out into loud condemnation of their sin? No; he immediately humbled himself before the Lord his God, and prayed; "And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I *fell upon my knees*, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, and said, O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens"—and so he goes on to the end of the chapter.

And what a lesson to us! We ought to pity our erring brother or sister, whilst their sin deeply grieves us. We should smart for such an one, just as a man who has felt the sharpness of a wound himself knows how to smart for others, when they

are wounded. We should entreat God to show him his sin, to bring him to repentance, and grant him pardon.

Now take another case, and a very common one. What serious person is there, who does not feel unhappy when he sees that there are many around him—many with whom he worships—some even perhaps with whom he lives—whose hearts are not right with God? And his duty clearly is to pray for them. Now, they may not value his prayers. They may not desire them. They may never even know that they are offered. But still, the very fact of their not feeling that they want our prayers, makes it all the more necessary for us to offer them.

You remember that when St. Paul was at Troas, a man of Macedonia appeared as it were in a vision, who besought him, saying, "Come over and help us." Now, it appears that at that time there was not a single person in Macedonia in a state to *desire* St.

Paul's help. They knew nothing either of St. Paul or his Master. And yet their souls seemed to cry out for mercy before God. The soul of Lydia cried out, the soul of the jailer at Philippi, yea, the souls of many others as yet unawakened cried out, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Again, St. Paul had no means of knowing, till the Lord revealed it to him, that the Macedonians specially required his help: but how many do we *know* to be in this condition! There is not a relative we have, who is as yet unconverted, whose soul does not cry out, "Come, and help us with your prayers." We cannot receive a visit from a friend, or meet an acquaintance by the way, but a fresh occasion for intercessory prayer is presented to our minds.

What a duty this brings before us! "What a *bondage*!" some might be inclined to say. Yes; God's service, which is a bondage, the veriest bondage, to one man, is the most perfect freedom to another.

And those, whose hearts are oftenest at the throne of grace, find the greatest privilege and enjoyment in the performance of this duty. It may be hard and irksome at first, but the habit becomes easier by frequent use, and brings with it abundant peace and refreshment to the soul. May the Lord tune our hearts for this exercise; and may every call to prayer be as sweet to us as the fresh air of the morning is to the lark; and may our souls mount upwards, and knock at Heaven's gate! Thus all our intercourse in life will be turned, as it ought to be, into blessing, both to others and to ourselves.

But again, suppose we have prayed for a person for months, aye, it may be years, and we see him just as he ever was, his state unaltered. What then? This is, doubtless, a sore trial for our faith. But should we give up our prayers? Should we say to ourselves, That beloved relative, over whom my heart has yearned so long, and for whose conversion I have looked so anxiously, or

that friend, or that stranger, for whom I have offered so many prayers, is beyond the reach of God's mercy; that heart is too wayward even for Divine grace to turn it? Hear what our Lord says; "*Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*" Has He not said, "*Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*" Perhaps there has been unbelief mixed with our petitions. It cannot be that the Lord will prove untrue to His word. Keep then close to His promise. Stir not from it. "Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come; it will not tarry." See how Samuel felt with regard to his rebellious, hard-hearted people; "Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in *ceasing* to pray for you." It is hard to bear a long night of discouragements; but the dawn will break at last. And nothing honours God so much as a calm, steady, persevering trust in Him. Would we then have the Lord to show His power, in the

conversion of those who are near and dear to us, we must rely upon Him, and never, never, give up praying for them.

If you need encouragements, you will find many in God's Word. Look, for instance, at the story of that Syrophenician woman, given us in Matt. xv. She came to our Lord to plead for her daughter. But at first He answered her not a word. And so it went on. All her petitions seemed to be in vain; till at last her request was granted to the full. She persevered, because she had faith. Do you ask for more faith to enable you to persevere. I would say unto you, as our Lord said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Be not afraid; only believe."

Another case I will mention—that of a person who has done us an injury; who, we think, has behaved ill to us. Our Lord's rule in such a case is, "Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." How happy a thing it would be if we could carry this rule into effect; and the moment

any one offends us, endeavour to lift up our hearts in prayer for him. This was David's plan. In Ps. cix. he says, "For my love (or in return for my love) they are mine enemies; but *I give myself unto prayer.*" But no man can do this, who does not live in close communion with God. We cannot expect that a storm of angry feeling rising in the breast can be suddenly hushed into the calm of prayer, unless the heart is in a watchful, devout state. Try to live in this happy state of mind. The very moment an angry feeling against any one is stirred up within you, lose not an instant, but immediately check it; go straightway, and pray for that person. Then you will be able to say with David, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments."

But if there is one case, in which intercessory prayer is more called for than another, it is in that holy relationship which exists between a minister and his people. He may preach faithfully to them, he may visit them

constantly, he may instruct them with utmost care. But all will be to little ~~pose~~, if he does not pray for them; if he not bring their wants before God, and treat Him to bless his labours among ~~1~~ And *their* prayers, too, must be offered *for him*, that the Holy Spirit may rest his soul, that he may deliver, not his message, but God's, that he may be sustained in all his trials, and lead them true and living pastures. Oh, have we need to say to you, as Paul did, "Brethren, pray for us?"

There is one more case that I do not to leave out. It is when any brother, friend or neighbour is in trouble. Then it seem that a Christian's prayers are specially called forth.

The child of God must ever feel that time of trouble is a time peculiarly suited to prayer. "In the day of my trouble (the Psalmist) will I call upon Thee Thou wilt answer me." "In my distress



ed unto the Lord, and He heard me.” “I  
 ight the Lord, and He heard me, and de-  
 ered me from all my fears.” And if in  
 r own trials God is our only refuge, should  
 not fly to Him, when any of our brethren  
 e in heaviness? This is the best and most  
 ectual way of relieving their load, and of  
 owing them that we really feel for  
 em.

Let me now say just a few words on the  
 bject of *Answers to prayer*.

God is specially spoken of in Scripture as  
 he who hears and answers prayer. We  
 ve numberless instances mentioned. See  
 annah going up to the house of God with  
 a sorrowful spirit,” unburdening her heart  
 the Lord, and departing with “her  
 untenance no more sad.” Look at Heze-  
 ah “spreading Sennacherib’s letter before  
 e Lord.” See Daniel and his companions  
 unning to God in the hour of their difficul-  
 es, and seeking Him by prayer. All these

were *heard* prayers, *answered* prayers. The Bible is full of such answers to prayer. Remember how the prayers of the Church delivered Peter from death. And you all know how the thief prayed on the cross, "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." And you recollect the speedy and gracious reply which greeted him in his dying hour, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

Ask the children of God ; they will all bear witness that God hears prayer. They will tell you of comforts granted, troubles sweetened, sins forgiven, enemies conquered, temptations resisted, fears removed, and heaven opened ; and all in answer to prayer. And they will tell you too that no blessing is so precious as that on which they can write, "*Received in answer to prayer.*" "I love the Lord," said David, "because He hath heard my voice and my supplications."

One word more, on prayer generally, before I close.

Some of you will not pray ; you care not for prayer now ; you think to yourself, " I shall one day become a praying man, but not yet ; God's ear is always open." And will it be so for ever ? Will it be so when you pass into eternity ? It will be too late for prayer *then* — too late ! Life is the season for prayer. This side the grave is the only praying ground. Oh that the Holy Spirit may impress this upon your heart !

Some of you feel you cannot pray. Then go and say, " Lord, *teach* us how to pray." Make the attempt, poor though it be, and God will be found of you, if you seek Him heartily.

Some of you love prayer. It is your comfort, your refreshment, the precious source of all your strength. Soon will your prayer be turned into praise. Soon your poor, feeble, faltering petitions will be exchanged for joyful hallelujahs. In that bright home

of yours, every harp will be in tune, and every voice eager to say, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto *Him* that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!"

## SERMON XVII.

THE LEPER.

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LEVITICUS XIII. 45, 46.

“And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.”

WE often read in the Bible about the Plague of Leprosy. And those persons who have lately travelled in the countries of the East tell us that this disease, or something very like it, is to be met with even at the present day.

This disorder was of such a fearful nature and prevailed so much among the Israelites that God was pleased to give some special commands concerning it. Indeed, there is every reason to believe that leprosy was looked upon as a type or emblem of sin. This outward disease of the body was a sad picture of the inward disease of the soul.

Whilst we take this then as the subject of our meditation, may God make it both interesting and instructive to us! May He give us a deeper insight into our own hearts, and lead us to that Fountain which has been "opened for sin, and for uncleanness!" I shall speak,

First, of the NATURE OF THIS DISEASE.

Secondly, of the TREATMENT OF THE LEPER.

Thirdly, of the CURE.

We will begin with the NATURE OF THE DISEASE. Leprosy was a most awful complaint. It was considered to be a judgment from God; and therefore it was called the "*Plague of Leprosy.*" It was a kind

iving death, an eating away little by little of the whole body; so that one limb after another actually decayed and fell off. It grew up in the body unseen and unfelt, till it wasted away the whole substance. It began within, and was sometimes three or four years before it showed itself on the skin. And is it not thus with the soul's disease of sin? Trace back the sinner's course, and will you not find that it began with some little sin, some secret hidden sin, which was allowed to root itself in the heart? For a time perhaps it was unseen and unfelt; but all the while it was eating away the very life of the soul.

There are some plants which, if you allow them to take root in your gardens, will strike so deep in the soil, and spread so widely, that nothing but great toil and labour will enable you to get rid of them. Just so it is with our sins. It is very dangerous to allow a single sin, the very smallest sin, the most secret sin, to rest undisturbed in the heart. Though the eye

of your fellow-men may not detect it, and though you yourself even may not feel its poison, be assured it is daily growing and gaining ground, within. Wherever then it be—however dear to you—pluck it out, before it gains the complete mastery over you.

Some have observed that one sad feature in this Plague of Leprosy was, that it was contagious, or catching. There is great doubt however whether this was really the case. Certainly we are not told so in Scripture. But this we *are* told, that the poor unhappy leper was not to be touched; and if any one happened to touch him, he was considered as unclean or defiled. And why was this? Doubtless, it was to teach us this great lesson with regard to sin, that we must not tamper with it, we must not even touch it; “Enter not into the path of the wicked; and go not into the way of evil men: avoid it; pass by it; turn from it, and pass away.” If we trifle with sin we



are sure to suffer for it. We cannot mix with sinners without injury to our own souls. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."

And if the conscience of any one tells him that he has been the means of leading a friend or a companion into the way of sin, I would put this solemn question to him, What would you think of some wretched Leper, who would wilfully and deliberately touch another person, and render him unclean in the eyes of his brother? Would you not look upon him as most cruel? Ah! but you have done more. You have acted still more cruelly. You have led a brother into the path of sin. You have ruined him perhaps, not merely for time, but for eternity! Go, and think of this. Go, and weep bitterly for your sin before God, and implore His pardon.

There were many other striking features

in the disease of leprosy ; but I pass on to consider, secondly, THE TREATMENT OF THE LEPER.

In common cases of illness a person naturally applies to a physician to heal him ; but in the case of Leprosy, when any one was supposed to be visited with that disorder, he was not directed to consult a *Physician*, but to apply to the *Priest*. This you will see by referring to the second verse. The Priest was to examine him, and to pronounce him either clean or unclean. And would it not be well for us, if we were to go oftener to Jesus, our great High-priest, and lay bare our hearts before Him, saying, " Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting !" He has eyes of fire to discover sin in His people ; He can detect its first rising ; and He is able also to subdue its power, and to deliver us from its dominion.

If it proved to be a case of real leprosy,

the Priest *condemned the man as unclean*. From that moment his wretchedness began ; and we can hardly fancy any earthly condition more truly deplorable than his.

Look closely into our text, and you will see first that *his clothes were to be rent*, and *his head bare*. This was in token of his misery. Leprosy was not in itself a sin ; but it was a sad mark of God's displeasure. The wretched man was henceforth to go mourning all his days in the bitterness of his soul. There was little now to cheer him, scarcely a ray of hope to break in upon his gloom.

Again we read, he was to *put a covering upon his upper lip*. This was a token that he was condemned to wander about in silence. He must no longer speak to his fellow-men. His pale, ghastly face is covered up to the eyes, too loathsome to be seen.

And not only was he cut off from the company of those who were most dear to him, but he was shut out from their very

sight. He was to "dwell alone." His habitation was to be "without the camp." He must now be a poor solitary outcast. He is shut out from the congregation of the Lord's people, and even from the Lord's house itself. How sad, how forlorn, is his condition! He may come within *sight* of the camp, but must *not enter it*. He sees afar off the tents of healthy, happy Israel; but he sits without in mourning sadness. Men hide their very faces from him as he draws near. The unhappy leper, too, was to warn others to take heed of coming near him. Wherever he went, he was to cry to those whom he saw at a distance, "Unclean, unclean;" as much as to say, "Take heed of touching me."

Here is a picture of the sinner in this world. He may not own himself a sinner; he may not feel his sins; he may not be conscious of his misery. But such is his real condition, shut out from God's presence! the inner man diseased! his powers

withered ! his mind corrupted ! his very heart diseased ! He has no fellowship with God's people. Their ways and feelings are not suited to him. He sees them happy ; but he can take no part in their joy.

And then cast your eyes forward. See the sinner in the state to come—unclean for ever ! shut out from God, and from His people ! unfit to dwell with holy men ! unfit for his Saviour's presence ! Think what it will be, when those solemn words shall for ever shut up the sinner in despair, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels."

But *now* there is hope ; hope even for the chief of sinners, if only the grace of God bring him to repentance. *Now* is "the day of salvation ;" *now* is the time of mercy. We read in the Bible here and there an instance of *the leper being cleansed*. And we read of here and there *a sinner*

*being restored.* We read of pardoning love. We read of the blood of Christ "cleansing from all sin."

Let me, then, in the last place, dwell for a few moments on the happiest part of this subject—THE LEPER'S CURE.

This disease was looked upon as incurable. No skill of man could check it; no medicine subdue it. It could only be cured by the immediate power of God. To restore the pale, loathsome, putrid leper to the health and vigour of a little child was what God alone could do. And thus our Lord Jesus Christ showed His exceeding power, as much by healing the leper, as by raising the dead. It was His great delight to show mercy. And on whom could He bestow His godlike compassion more effectually, than on some of these unhappy sufferers? Open your Bible at Mark i., and see Him there engaged in this work of love. We read (v. 40), "And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneel-

ing down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." He seems to have known something of the *power* of Christ, but he doubted His *willingness*. But Jesus soon proved to him that He was both *able* and *willing* to cure him. Doubtless he had often met with contempt from his fellow-men. He had been used to see them shun him, and flee from his very presence. But there was something in our Lord's countenance that encouraged him. He hoped at least to be greeted with a word of kindness. But far more than this did he receive; "And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand and touched him, and saith unto him, Be thou clean: and as soon as He had spoken, the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed."

Another case of the same kind is mentioned in Luke xvii. We are told (in v. 12), that as Jesus entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off." These wretched men, companions in misery, and compelled

to "dwell alone," away from the haunts of men, herded together, and thus dragged on their wretched existence. And now that they behold Jesus, they make a desperate effort to move His compassion. Never was a cry more earnest than theirs. They felt their disease, and longed to be healed. "And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us; and when He saw them, He said unto them, Go, show yourselves unto the priests: and as they went, they were cleansed."

And now what shall we say of these things? Is there not a searching lesson for us here? And is there not much also to comfort and encourage us, if we really desire to be freed from sin?

What is sin? It is *the leprosy of the soul*, most loathsome, most hateful in the sight of God. He is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;" and the sinner uncleaned, unpardoned, cannot dwell with *Him*. Only the pure in heart shall see



God. And oh, when we look within, how much evil is there in each one of us! Only take a single day—last Sunday, for instance, that day which is the best of all the seven, the Lord's-day. How was it with us in the morning, when we rose from our beds? How long were we upon our knees? Was there no hurry, no coldness, no deadness, in our private devotions? Was God's Word taken up with due reverence and delight, or was it read as a mere task, just to satisfy our conscience? What was our conversation during the day? Did we "take sweet counsel together," and stir up each other's faith, and warm each other's hearts, by speaking as brother pilgrims on our way to heaven? Or did this world and its concerns engross our attention? And when we went to God's house, were our souls lifted up in earnest prayer, or did the world follow us even there, and steal away our hearts? I am not speaking of the openly wicked; but I am speaking of you who profess to be God's people.

And is there not enough to make us tremble? Is there not much in our own state, that matches too well the picture of the wretched leper? Well is it ~~for~~ *us*, if we have been taught to feel our disease. Well is it, if the Holy Spirit has convinced us of our guilt, and we have been led to cry, "Unclean, unclean!" This is the first step towards our recovery. Then will Jesus look upon us with compassion, and say to us, "I will; be thou clean!" His touch is healing! His look is life!

But if you have not yet felt your guilt, I pray that God may convince you of it. It is not enough to own that *all* have sinned. You must feel and acknowledge that *you* have sinned. But if, through God's mercy, your eyes have been opened, and your heart convinced, then I would direct you to the Gospel remedy—a crucified, an atoning Saviour. O leprous soul, you need not "sit alone" in hopeless despair. There is One not far off, who is

ready to bless you, and to cleanse you with His blood. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," so has the Son of Man been "lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

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The Rev. R. M. M'Cheyne, in one of his letters, writes,—“The awful disease of leprosy still exists in Africa. It is regarded as perfectly incurable, and so infectious, that no one dares to come near the leper. In the South of Africa there is a large lazaret-house (or hospital) for lepers. It is an immense space inclosed by a very high wall, containing fields, which the lepers cultivate. Whenever any one is found with the marks of leprosy upon him, he is brought to the gate, and obliged to enter in, never to return. No one who enters in by that awful gate is ever allowed to come out again. Within this abode of misery there are multitudes of lepers in all stages of

the disease. Dr. Halbeck, from the top of a very high hill, saw them at work. He noticed two particularly, sowing peas in the field. The one *had no hands*; the other *had no feet*; these members being wasted away by disease. The one who wanted the hands was carrying the other who wanted the feet, upon his back, and so they managed the work of one man between the two. Ah! how little we know of the misery that is in the world. Such is the prison-house of disease."

## SERMON XVIII.

## THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING.

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1 COR. I. 21.

“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

THE *Preaching* of God's Word! This is one chief purpose for which we assemble in God's house. It is not the *only* purpose. No, we meet there for *Prayer* also. We meet in that house as a company of needy, guilty creatures, to plead for one another; to speak to our Father, for ourselves, and for our brethren; to tell Him of our many wants; to confess our sins together; to ask

Him for His grace, and to thank Him for His mercies; to sing praises to Him for His goodness. Oh, what a blessed employment! Who would shut himself out from it? Who would exchange the calm, peaceful hours of Sabbath worship for all the boisterous mirth of a giddy world? Who would not say with David, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth:" "For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness"? Go there always with joy and thankfulness. And before you go, make a point of praying earnestly to the Lord to prepare your hearts for His worship. Then you will find that instead of having your mind full of wandering thoughts, you will enter heartily into the prayers that are offered up, and it will be a season of sweet refreshment to your soul.

*But the Preaching of God's Word is the*

other great object for which we meet in church. And to this the words of our text point. It may be asked, Which is the most important, *preaching* or *praying*? I dare not set one above the other. By preaching a man is brought to know the value of prayer: and by prayer a blessing is called down on the word preached. In the one God speaks to you by His ministers: in the other you speak to God. Let us set a higher value on both than we have ever yet done.

But I am now speaking of *Preaching*. And observe the expression which the Apostle here makes use of concerning it, "The *foolishness* of preaching." "It pleased God by the *foolishness* of preaching to save them which believe."

And why does He call it "foolishness"? First, because the preaching of the Gospel is committed to *weak hands*. God has often sent angels from heaven to declare His will, and to announce His judgments; but never to preach His Gospel. On this

errand He has been pleased to employ man. He has always entrusted His Gospel message to plain, simple men. "We have this treasure (St. Paul says) in *earthen vessels*, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

How did He act at the first? Did He go about Jerusalem searching for learned priests and rabbies, that he might call *them* to the work? Did He send to Corinth or Athens in the hope of finding out some wise philosophers there, who might be willing to undertake the task? No, he knew that His Gospel would speak for itself—that there was a power in it, which even the greatness of man could not add to. And so He called a few humble, but willing, men, and prepared them by His grace for the work; such as Peter, and James, and John, who were fishermen; Matthew, who was a publican, or tax-gatherer; and Paul and Aquila, who were tent-makers. He passed by the great and mighty of the earth, and set the seal of His ministry on these.



“Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called; but God chose the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; and God chose the weak things of this world to confound the things which were mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, did God choose: that no flesh should glory in His presence.”

And how is it now? It is not the *man*, but the *message*. It is not the *Preacher*, but *God speaking by the Preacher*. “Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. I have planted, Apollos watered.” I may be employed to scatter the precious seed, and another to rear the plant; but after all, it is “God that giveth the increase.”

Again, what are *the means* we use? Are we to summon up all our ingenuity and cleverness, and dress out the Gospel, and so fit it for your acceptance? No, we are to set the Gospel before you in all its plain,

beautiful simplicity. Hear what St. Paul said to the Corinthians, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." And in the seventeenth verse of this chapter he says, "Christ sent me to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."

We do not deny that learning is well in its way. It is the duty of the Christian Church to train up men carefully for the sacred office of the ministry, and to prepare them by every means for their difficult and trying work. But sure I am, that learning *alone* will not make a good minister. It is

not the most *learned* man, but the man whose heart is most filled with the Spirit of God, that will win the most souls.

Here then is one reason why the preaching of the Gospel is called "foolishness," because the preachers of it are but poor feeble men, who lay but little stress on human wisdom, when they deliver their message.

But there is another reason for calling it "foolishness." The *subject* of it—the very thing we preach about—is foolishness in the eyes of many. When Moses told the dying Israelites to look upon the brazen serpent in the wilderness, I dare say that was counted folly by many of them. And so, when the early preachers went about telling of a crucified Saviour, it seemed only folly to many of them. The very account of the crucifixion was just suited to raise their scorn; for death on the cross was the greatest possible disgrace; it was the death that only slaves and the lowest felons were *subject to*. To speak then of salvation

through a crucified malefactor was fitted only to excite their contempt. What! to hope for salvation through one who *could not save Himself*? and to trust in one who was cut off by so vile a death? to *live* through one who *died*? to be *blessed* by one who was made a *curse*? This seemed to the unbelieving as the very height of folly.

Thank God, this is the precious truth that Christ's ministers preach *now*. There will be some that despise it; some whose hearts cannot stoop to receive it; some who listen coldly to it, as a thing which little concerns them. But still there will be some who will welcome it as the only remedy for their sin-stricken souls—the sweetest balm for all their sorrows.

But stop. Did you ever feel, my brother, that the Cross, and the preaching of the Cross, was utter foolishness in *your* eyes? Do you confess that you have no taste for it, and that it has no charm in *your* ears? Go then, and mourn over the state of your heart. Ask God to take away the

veil from your eyes; to show you your need of Christ, and to give you a taste for that on which others are feeding to their souls' comfort.

Yes, the preaching of the Cross is in one sense "foolishness." "*To them that perish*" it is no better than "foolishness."

But let us now look at it in another light. What wonders does it sometimes accomplish! It does what nothing else can do. Whilst human wisdom can only amuse the ear, and charm the mind, *it* can save the soul. "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching *to save* them that believe." God might have chosen other methods to bring men to the knowledge of Himself, but He chose this. He might have revealed Himself in dreams and visions. He might have employed angels as His messengers. He might have called men to Himself by a voice from heaven. But no; *Preaching* is the great

instrument He has adopted for bringing salvation to men's hearts, and adding believers to His Church.

Our Lord's parting words to His Apostles were, "Preach the Gospel to every creature." And such was St. Paul's charge to Timothy, "Preach the Word." By preaching, three thousand souls were awakened on the day of Pentecost. By preaching, Lydia was converted. And what shall I say more? Who can tell how many hearts have been touched, and how many sinners awakened from the deep sleep of sin, by the simple preaching of the Cross? God has many methods by which He works ; but this is His *usual* method—His *chief* method—for bringing souls into His kingdom. The judgments of God may sometimes drive men to a stand ; the law may do much to alarm sinners ; but the gentle voice of the Gospel is the key which opens the heart to Christ.

Having shown you then *why* it is that the preaching of God's Word is called foolishness, and that it is, in the hands of

God, the one grand means of saving souls,  
let me urge upon you,

1st. *To set a high value upon it.* I know it is nothing without the Spirit of God. The preacher's words will fall lifeless and useless upon the ear, unless God makes a way for them into the heart. Numbers have come, and numbers are still coming, to the house of God week after week. They sit before the preacher Sunday after Sunday. They listen to sermon after sermon. And yet they remain as unmoved as when they first entered. The Word preached, whilst it is blessed to *others*, does not seem to profit *them*, "not being mixed with faith in them that hear it."

Whose fault is this? Is it God's fault? No; He is willing, most willing, to save you. His Word is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." Is it the preacher's fault? I trust not; for it is not *he* who speaks, but God *through him*. Ah! my friend, is it not then *your*

fault? Is there not a voice within you which whispers, "It is I that am to blame. The Word speaks plainly enough; but I have no heart to receive it. The Word affectionately calls me; but I turn away from it. The Word lays open to me my sins; but I draw the curtain over them again. The Word tells me of my danger; but I heed it not. And it tells me too of a Saviour who can make me safe and happy; but I will not come to Him, that I may have life."

Learn, then, I say, to set a due value on the preaching of the Gospel. You may not hear many more sermons. God may not have many more messages for you. Each time that you sit and listen to a sermon, you hear for eternity. And each time that you hear to no purpose, you go away condemned: the Gospel is a "savour of death" unto you.

Is it any wonder then that ministers feel anxious? If they picture to themselves thousands of lost ones now in hell; and if



they reflect that some of their hearers may be now, at this time, on the broad road which leads thither, can they but be earnest in their pleadings with you, when they see you gathered around them to listen to their message?

And how must they feel with regard to those who seldom or never come within the sound of the Gospel? Can they feel satisfied that these should stay away? Such persons may read their Bibles at home; they may take up good books now and then; but still they are neglecting God's saving ordinance. They turn away from the preaching of His Word, and in so doing they reject the great means which He in His mercy has provided for their salvation.

A second point I wish to urge upon you is this—*Pray for a blessing* on the preaching of God's Word.

St. Paul makes this solemn request of the Thessalonians, "Brethren, pray for

us." And if St. Paul felt that such a request was needful, Oh what need have *preachers now* to make the same request! Pray for them then, that they may speak words of wisdom; that they may rightly divide God's truth; that they may have one, only one, object in their sermons—to save your souls. Pray always before you come to God's house, that He will put a word in their mouths fitted to your case; that He will suit the sermon to your wants. And pray too that it may be blest to *others*; that it may be the happy means of gathering many wanderers into the fold. Indeed, when ministers preach to a *praying* congregation, there will be a power felt in their words, which will show that "God is with them of a truth." Resolve then always to offer up *special* prayer for a blessing on the preaching of God's Word.

3rdly. Be prepared to be *counted fools* for Christ's sake. Surely, if the Gospel

of Christ is foolishness in the eyes of many, then those who receive it, and profess to walk by its rules, will be reckoned nothing better than fools. Yes; this is one of the taunts we must bear, if we would take up our Master's cross. The finger of scorn was pointed at *Him*, and why should *we* escape? Let a man give his mind to worldly business; let him be shrewd and sharp in the management of his affairs; let his merchandise, or his farm, or his shop thrive under his care, and he will at once be applauded; he will be accounted a clever man. But let him give his heart to God; let him live for another world; let him be anxious about his soul; let him try to walk in the Scripture path, and immediately a cry is raised against him, and his conduct is accounted folly. I ask you, is it not so?

Reckon upon such treatment, if you would be Christ's. Count the cost, if you would be a servant of the lowly and despised Saviour.

Away with your pride ; away with your self-esteem ; away with your good name among the worldly. It must all be given up, and trodden under foot. You must stoop. You must humble yourself. You must think little of your own wisdom ; and as the Apostle says, you must “become a fool, that you may be wise.”

## SERMON XIX.

### THE CHRISTIAN TEMPTED.

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LUKE XXII. 46.

“Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”

THESE were the words that our Lord spoke to His disciples, as they were sleeping for sorrow in the garden of Gethsemane, on that awful night before He suffered. Much was passing through *His* mind, that kept Him wakeful. But, as He looked upon His followers, He saw that *their* eyes were heavy. “What! could ye not watch with me one hour?” “Why sleep ye?”

And when the Saviour looks down from heaven *now*, has He not reason to utter the *same* mournful complaint—“Why sleep ye?”

What ! are any of you asleep, when eternity is so near ? Are any of you asleep, when your souls are not yet saved—when the work is not finished, nay, hardly begun in some of you ? Unsaved, and yet asleep ?

Yet so it is. The world at this moment is slumbering. The careless, unconverted part of the world are fast locked in sleep. The god of this world has closed their eyes, and lulled them to rest. And even the better part of the world, God's people—those who have set their faces heavenward—they too are only half awake. Christ is coming ; but they only half believe it ; they are only half prepared to meet Him. The world is gliding away from them, and eternity is hurrying in upon them. It is getting nearer and nearer. And yet they live to the world, instead of living above it.

Yes, Christ seems to say to us all, "Why sleep ye ?" And there is one thing which ought specially to keep us awake, and put us on our guard, and that is the fear of temptation.

All Christ's people have to encounter temptation. It is a warfare from which none of His servants are free. Even Jesus Himself had to fight this great battle. He Himself "suffered, being tempted." He says to His disciples, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me." And St. James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life."

Temptation is a part of our trial then; and it is what we must expect on our way to the kingdom. The poor man is daily tempted, and the rich man also; the man who is forced to mix in a busy world, and the man who is laid by upon a sick bed. The young believer too is tempted at the very outset of his Christian course. He soon finds that difficulties are in his way. He has to strive manfully for the prize. "Without are fightings: within are fears."

And even the advanced Christian will tell you, that although he has many a time fought hard, and beaten off his enemy, yet he has still need to keep on his armour, and to fight the good fight. The victory is not yet won, though he has the promise to cheer him, "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

But it may be well for us to bear in mind that there are *two kinds* of temptation that a Christian usually meets with. One kind is altogether *painful* to us; we hate it directly it approaches us. The other is altogether *enticing*, and on that account is all the more likely to draw us aside.

When I speak of *painful* temptations, I mean such as these—when an earnest Christian is tempted to *unbelief*, or to *distrust* of God.

Now, these give him the greatest pain. Many a child of God has felt them, and groaned bitterly under them. It is his desire to serve God faithfully, and to walk



closely with Him. But Satan takes advantage of his poor weak faith, and darts into his mind some unbelieving thought, which deeply pains and distresses him. Formerly perhaps, before he knew the Lord, no such feeling ever disturbed him. Till called by grace, he knew not that he had within him "an evil heart of unbelief." But now he finds it out. Once he used to believe as a matter of course. But all that time there was no real living faith in his heart. But *now* it has sprung up; and very soon it is tried and sifted, and then he discovers what a weak and tender plant it is. We never find careless and worldly people cast down and distressed by their want of faith. No such uneasiness troubles *them*. But it is the child of God that mourns over his unbelief. It is *his* heart that Satan often wounds with his fiery darts.

Such temptations are very distressing to a tender conscience. But the very fact of their being distressing shows that they come from Satan; and therefore, if we try

to put them from us, the guilt lies not at our door. God does not condemn us, but rather pities us, and knowing our weakness, stands ready to strengthen us with His grace.

Again, I have known a truly religious man greatly cast down with doubts, and fears, and distrust. His confidence fails him. He feels that Jesus is not willing, or not able, to save him. He doubts whether he is truly a child of God. This is a sore temptation, and not an uncommon one. It shuts out all joy and light from the soul, and makes a man for the time a gloomy, instead of a rejoicing, Christian. Happy is it for the poor tried Christian, when he discovers this to be a temptation from Satan, and when God makes it a blessing to him instead of an evil, humbling him under it, and leading him to the cross of His dear Son.

But now let us turn to a different class of temptations; those that are *enticing*, that

promise us something *pleasant* rather than painful, and therefore, on this account, are far more dangerous. Many a man (as the Apostle says) is "tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." The Tempter knows our evil nature, and always attacks us on our weakest point. If he sees that we are fond of praise, for instance, he will throw flattery in our way; and there is something pleasant in it to our evil hearts. Or again, if we are ill-treated, he will tempt us to be angry, to speak rashly, and to return evil for evil. And there is something pleasant too in this to a carnal mind. Thus does he get the advantage over us, and leads us "captive at his will."

And what numberless temptations has *the world* got for us? And Satan makes use of all these to draw us into his net, and ruin our souls—riches, honour, pride, covetousness, dress, and all else that charms

our poor foolish minds, and shuts out the great things of God from us.

Now, such temptations are not painful to most men. They do not distress them. Would to God they did ! for then would they be rejected. But they are so enticing—so entangling—that the heart gives way, and yields itself to them ; sometimes *at once*, and sometimes *not without a hard struggle*, and after they have been again and again resisted.

But you will observe that Christ says in our text, “Lest ye *enter* into temptation.” There is a great difference between *being tempted*, and “*entering into*” *temptation* ; that is, falling into it, giving way to it. David and Joseph were exposed to the same kind of temptation. David “*entered into*” it, and fell. Joseph was kept from entering into it ; he resisted it, and stood.

You have often seen a raised footpath across a swamp. If you keep the footpath,

you are safe. Whilst you are walking there, there may be flowers to tempt you on the right and left, or there may seem to be a shorter road. Now, whilst you are walking in the path, temptation may be *very near* you, but you have not yet *entered into it*. You are close to it, but you have not yet set your foot on the dangerous ground. The fly hovers round the spider's web; to touch it is to enter into it. The bird flies very near the fowler's snare; but if it once pecks at the bait, it is then caught, and cannot escape. The moth flutters round the candle, and if it did no more, it would be safe; but if it enters into the flame, its wings are burnt. How clearly St. James describes the difference between *enduring* temptation, and *falling* by it. He does not say, "Blessed is the man who is free from temptation," for such a man breathes not; but "Blessed is the man that *endureth* temptation"—blessed is the man who keeps in the footpath, and

resists the evil that is so near him. He has fought the good fight, won the battle, and shall receive the crown.

Learn then, you who are followers of Christ, the great danger you are in. Oh! shudder when the Tempter comes to you. Do not listen to him. Do not encourage him for a moment. "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from thee." "Escape for thy life, tarry thou not, lest thou be consumed."

And learn too another thing which ought to give you comfort—that a temptation is only sinful when it is *yielded* to. Christ was not sinful when He was tempted; no more are you. It is when we *welcome* the Tempter, and *open the door* to admit the temptation, *then* we become guilty.

But the Lord Jesus told His three slumbering disciples what they were to do for safety. "Rise (He says), and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

"Rise and pray:" that was His advice. They were sleeping, and He calls upon

them to "rise," that is, to wake up, and be on their guard. We take things too easily. We are not enough upon our watchtowers. Examine all the slips and falls that you have ever been guilty of. You may trace them nearly all to one point—being off your guard, leaving as if you were your watchtower—falling asleep, when you ought to be looking out. You have sometimes fallen in with bad company; you have been drawn into their loose conversation; you have been led to utter unguarded words, which you have afterwards felt ashamed of. How was this? Why, it was want of watchfulness. Or, in a sudden, you may have given way to anger, and lost yourself for a moment. And how was this? You were taken off your guard—you left your watchtower.

Hear what St. Peter says,—“Be sober, be vigilant.” And why? Because your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, doth about, seeking whom he may devour.” He is very watchful to ruin us;

and we have need to be watchful too. We may be sure that there is not a chink or crevice in our hearts which Satan overlooks. We may be sure that we never make a careless step that he does not take advantage of. Indulge yourself ever so little in an evil temper, and you "give place to the Devil"—a place which he will come and fill to a certainty. Allow one foolish word to escape from your lips, he will spy his opportunity, and persuade you into more. Let your eye but rove a little towards some forbidden object, and he will take occasion from it to stir up some evil desire in your heart. Once say of any sin, "Is it not a little one?" and suffer yourself on that ground to indulge in it, and immediately Satan will take advantage of you.

Let us remember then our Lord's advice: "Rise, and watch;" and also His other advice; "Pray."

*Prayer* is our grand preservative against temptation. Prayer is God's appointed way to keep the soul from temptation. And it



s thus that we enlist God in our defence, and take hold of His strength.

No wonder then, that Satan tries hard to prevent us from praying. When distressing temptations assault our souls, he often whispers in our ears, "*You pray! will God hear you?*" It is mocking God for so vile a wretch as you to pray. You had far better give over, and not provoke God as you are doing. Look too at your prayers! See how wandering they are, and broken, how little faith there is in them; and look at all your failings and your sins. Will God hear? Will He answer such an one as you?"

Ah! let nothing keep you from a throne of grace. Pray on, weak as you are, and strength and grace will be given you. The more you are tempted, the more earnest let your prayers be. Leave off praying, cease to watch, and *that* is the very thing that Satan desires. He has gained his point. It is like laying down your sword and your shield when the enemy comes up to you. It.

is like throwing open the gates of the city, when the army draws near.

But remember always that you must *watch* as well as *pray*. You must not go to sleep yourself, under the notion that the Lord will guard you. It is the *wakeful*, not the *slothful* servant, who has a warrant to look up for God's protection. When you pray therefore, "Lord, guard me, and watch over me," you must also pray, "Lord, put my soul upon the watch: enable me to keep my heart with all diligence." Let your prayers be followed up with watchful efforts, looking well to your own goings, guarding against every evil thought and desire, dreading sin in its beginnings, not venturing to tread even near the edge of what is evil, lest you should be tempted to go one step forward into Satan's ground.

Temptation then in some shape or other is what every Christian must expect. Aye, and those who have been the most severely tried by it are oftentimes the brightest

Christians. Jesus does not say, "Pray *against* temptation," but He says, "Pray, *lest ye enter into it*," "pray, Lead us not *into* temptation."

In the hour when Satan assaults you, think of this to your great comfort. Your Redeemer Himself was tempted; and therefore He can feel for you, and knows how to succour you.

Comfort yourself too with the thought that many of your Christian brethren are the *companions* of your trials. And is it not cheering to think of those who once suffered as you do, and are now far out of the Tempter's reach? Many a time, when they were on earth, had they to fight with this great adversary. Many a time would he have overpowered them, but God was on their side. They suffered much, and suffered to the end. Satan desired to have them, and sift them as wheat, but Jesus prayed for them, and their faith failed not. And at length God snatched them up out of his reach. And now he has lost them

for ever. They will never more have to learn what temptation means.

May we be followers of their faith and patience; and so we shall attain their blessed end. Yet a little while, and *we* also, if we faint not, shall be taken up into a place of safety; into our Father's presence, where we shall "lie down, and none shall make us afraid."

## SERMON XX.

## THE BUILDING PROVED.

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1 COR. III. 11—13.

“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire: and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”

If you read this chapter, you will see that there is a great deal in it about planting and building. “I have *planted*,” St. Paul says, in the sixth verse. In the ninth verse he says, “Ye are God’s *husbandry*, ye are God’s *building*.” Then, in the

tenth, he calls himself a *Master Builder*; "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise *Master Builder*, I have laid the foundation." Look at the sixteenth verse: there he reminds his Christian brethren that they are God's *building*, or *temple*; "Know ye not that ye are the *temple* of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."

In that part of the chapter which I have taken for my text, he speaks still further of this building.

He speaks—

First, of the *Foundation* of it;

Next, of the *Superstructure*; that is, of the walls, and other parts, which rise up from the foundation;

And then, of a *Day* coming, when the goodness and soundness of this building will be tried.

This concerns us all. We are every one of us, day by day, raising up some sort of a building; either one that will stand for ever, or one that will crumble,

and fall at last. May we have grace given us to look carefully and closely, each one of us, to our building, to see that all is well !

First, we will say a little about *the Foundation*. You know, that whether we are building a cottage or a palace, it is very important to have a good, solid foundation ; else, though we take ever so much pains afterwards, the work will not stand, and our labour will be all in vain. So it is in the work of salvation. Two men are represented at the end of Matt. vii ; one building his house on the sand, which the first heavy storm washed down ; the other choosing a rock for his foundation, on which his house rested firmly. Now, there are many false foundations, but only one true one, on which the Christian can rest his soul. And this we are plainly told in our text ; “ Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Christ is often called "the Foundation," "the Stone," "the Corner Stone," on which the Church of God is built. In Isaiah xxviii. 16, we read; "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." St. Peter speaks thus to the Jews in Acts iv, concerning Christ, "This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other." And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians (chapter ii.), writes thus; "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

When St. Paul went to Corinth with his heart yearning for the salvation of those to whom he preached, this was the



foundation that he carefully laid: "We preach Christ crucified." And this is the aim of every true minister now. They lay the very same foundation. They direct you to Christ. They tell you that *out of Him* is no salvation; that *in Him* is peace, happiness, safety. They are "determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

But remember, a preached Gospel will not save you. The hearing of the soundest sermon will not of itself move you on one step in the way to heaven. There are many, I fear, who have heard much of Christ, who will never see Him, never sit down with Him in His glorious kingdom. No, we must go to the Saviour, each one for himself. We must go and lay our guilty souls at the foot of His cross.

Have you done this? Do the sermons you hear send you away thoughtful? Have you ever left the House of God with a full and broken heart, saying within yourself, "Surely I am the chief of sinners."

To Christ I will turn, as my only hope. I will carry my heavy burden to Him. He shall be my all. I will, from this hour, live no longer to myself, but unto Him who 'loved me and gave Himself for me'?"

It is clearly shown us, I think, in our text, that Christ must be our only foundation.

But now, for the next point, the *super-structure*, or what is to be built *upon* this foundation. St. Paul says, "If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." He clearly is speaking here of two distinct builders. One builds up his walls with "gold, silver, or precious stones:" the other builds with "wood, hay, and stubble." There is a great difference between *gold* and *wood*, *silver* and *hay*, *precious stone* (or valuable stone) and *stubble*. The *foundation*, in both cases, may be good; but one may raise a beautiful building, like the temple

of old; and another may build his walls of such rubbishy materials, that they will last but a few years, and the first trying weather will beat through them.

So there is a great difference between Christians; I mean those who have really taken Christ as their foundation. Remember, the Apostle is not speaking here about those who have never known Christ, or who have never rested upon Him at all. He is speaking here only of Christian believers—godly persons. And he wants to show us that there is a great difference between *them*.

And do we not see it ourselves, both as regards *doctrine* and *practice*?

As regards *doctrine*, have we not sometimes known a man, who has seen clearly that Christ alone can save him? And he sees it still, and really desires to build upon Christ. But he has got confused. His faith has become warped. He has fallen into error. He has been drawn away into some false doctrine or other. And we see,

plainly enough, that his soul suffers. It does not grow.

I will give you an instance. Many members of our Church have, in the last few years, gone over to the Church of Rome. Some good men have gone from us; some, I believe, who loved their Saviour. Yes; and perhaps they love Him still. But they have joined a false, unscriptural Church, and their souls are starving in consequence. The foundation was right with them, it may be; but they have built upon it "wood, hay, and stubble."

And so too as regards *practice* also. We may have a full conviction of our need of Christ. We may flee to Him as our refuge, and be accepted. And then a coldness may come over us. We may have become careless in our way of living; not openly sinful, but careless. We may have been over-persuaded by our companions. We may have let in the world. It is not with us as it once was. We feel

t; and know it. We exclaim with sorrow, 'Oh, that I were as in months past!' and yet we cannot bring ourselves to give up Christ. We are still looking to Him. We have not cast away our foundation. What is this but building upon it "wood, hay, stubble"? Now, there are hundreds in the Christian Church doing this very thing. And hence it is that there are so many poor, feeble, ungainly Christians even among God's people, and so few right, holy, advanced Christians to be met with.

Let me exhort you then to examine yourself, and see how you stand with God. Look to the *foundation* you are building on. Is that right? Are you readily fixed on Christ? Is your footing firm? Have you counted all else but Jesus that you may be found in Him? Have you flung away every other prop, and are you taking your stand on His merits alone?

And look to *your building* too, to see if

you are adding stone to stone, all in their proper places. Beware of false doctrines. There is much error that looks very like truth.

We go to one man—a Christian man—and he perhaps tells us that he has had a dream. He seems disposed to make much of this dream, and takes it as a kind of voice from heaven. And thus, instead of being guided only by God's written Word, he trusts to his own wild fancies, and so gets led astray. This is building "wood, hay, stubble."

We meet another, and he tells us that a person has been talking to him who is a Mormonite. Much that this person said to him *appeared* to be very good. He becomes a little shaken in his own views, and is half disposed to follow this new teacher. What is the consequence? His mind wavers. He is "tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine." The building becomes unsteady, and totters. And he at length discovers, to his cost, that he

has been using "wood, hay, stubble," instead of the "gold, silver, and precious stones" of God's wholesome truth.

We hear of another, perhaps, who has gone into a Roman Catholic chapel. He only went there for once—just to see, it may be, what the Roman Catholic worship is like. There he finds much to please the ear and the eye, beautiful music, much bowing, and crossing, and change of posture, much of the outward form of devotion. But what is all this? It is "wood, hay, stubble." And these are poor materials for building up a soul, a poor exchange for sound Gospel truth and simple faith in a living, but unseen Saviour.

How important then it is to have got a firm grasp of the truth as it is in Scripture; and to be living upon it, and deriving daily nourishment from it. How careful we should be not to trifle with error in any shape. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt?" We know that if a little drop of poison gets into a

cup, the wholesomeness of it is gone. And if ever so small a stone gets out of its place, the building is sure to suffer. Let us be very watchful over our souls. And in these days, when men are too much like the people of Athens, ever seeking for something new, let us cleave more and more to the plain Word of God. Let us look with a little suspicion on every *new* path. And let us remember Jeremiah's word of caution, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls."

But in the latter part of our text St. Paul tells us of a *Day coming* which is to *try* these buildings of ours; "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire: and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

The Apostle refers, I think, here partly



to the great day of judgment, and partly to  
 any time of peculiar trial.

He may be speaking here of *persecution*,  
 or instance. If such a time was to come,  
 the unsoundness of many would be dis-  
 covered. The rottenness of their faith would  
 at once be seen, and the unwatchfulness of  
 their practice. Then the "wood, hay, and  
 stubble" would be scattered by the winds,  
 and only that which was solid would stand  
 the trial.

Or, if false teachers were to come among  
 us, doubtless many would fall into the  
 net; many too, who "*did* run well."  
 And who would stand? Why, those who  
 have been living near to God, leading watch-  
 ful lives, and who are clinging to God's  
 Word as their sure and safe guide.

Oh! that there might be many such found  
 among ourselves, many who could bear a  
 little sifting; whose "faith being much  
 more precious than gold that perisheth,  
 though it be tried with fire, might be  
 found unto praise, and honour, and glory."

and whose lives are so holy and heavenly, that nothing can move them from the rock on which they are fixed.

But there is a Day coming when we shall *all* be tried. It is easy for us now to colour over the *outside* of the building; easy to make a *good appearance* before men. But then all will be disclosed; "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that should not be known." "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it." "But who may abide the day of the Lord's coming?" asks Malachi; "and who shall stand when He appeareth; for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." "The day cometh that shall burn as an oven."

There is much that is worthless in all of us; much that is mere dross even in the gold; much that men have praised, but that will not bear the searching eye of God. There is much pride even in our humility; there is much unbelief even in our faith, much discontent, even in our submission,

much sin mixed with our very holiest acts. We have indeed reason to think but little of ourselves ; and to cry out in the poverty of our souls, “ My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me ! ”

And, Oh ! if it is thus even with the best and holiest of God’s people, how must it be with those of His children who have grown careless and unwatchful ? How unready *they* will be for the Saviour’s coming !

And how must it be with those who are *not* His children at all ! who never sought a Saviour, and never found Him ! who took this world for their portion, and made no preparation for another ! who ate, and drank, and slept, and bought, and sold, as if this world was to be their home for ever !

Is this the life that *you* are leading ? Then let me remind you of that Day when “ the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” Think

of that Day of which our text speaks, when  
 "the fire shall try every man's work."

You may deceive man, but you cannot  
 deceive God. You cannot mock Him.  
 Salvation is offered to you even now. It  
 is not too late. But *without Him* you must  
 be lost for ever; for, "if the righteous  
 scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly  
 and the sinner appear?"

## SERMON XXI.

## BROTHERLY LOVE.

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 GEN. XLV. 24.

“See that ye fall not out by the way.”

FROM whence come wars and fightings?”  
 St. James. “Come they not hence,  
 of your lusts, that war in your mem-  
 bers?” Yes, so it is. They all arise from  
 corrupt and sinful tempers. If this was  
 a fallen, sinful world, we should hear  
 of those wars and disputes among  
 nations, which cause so much bloodshed,  
 nothing of those petty quarrels and dis-

putings, which so often disturb the peace of villages and families.

Joseph knew this ; and, therefore, we find him giving this as a parting charge to his brethren as they were starting on their journey from Egypt to Canaan ; “ See that ye fall not out by the way.” He had just made himself known to them. He had reminded them of their wicked conduct in having got rid of him in a fit of envy, and sold him as a slave to the Egyptians. And he could not help remembering that he had often observed among them a quarrelsome and contentious spirit. He had heartily forgiven them for all that they had done to him. But he thought it likely that, as they travelled along, they would talk the matter over, and lay the blame upon each other. They would be likely to say to one, “ It was *you* who upbraided him with his dreams ;” to another, “ It was *you* that said, Let ‘ us kill him ;” to another, “ *You* were the one who stripped him of his fine coat of many colours ;” or, “ It was *you* that threw him

to the pit." And therefore Joseph, with much affection, charges them, "See that ye fall not out by the way." They were brethren. They were journeying on the same errand. They were travellers on the same road. They had one and the same object before them. And, however it might be with others, it would have been sad indeed for *them* to have quarrelled by the way. And will it be less sad for *us*?

Are we not *Travellers*, as Joseph's brethren were? We are not at home. We are not in our resting-place yet. We are on our journey. We are but pilgrims. We are strangers in a strange land. Oh, should not this lead us to be kind to one another by the way; to give a helping hand to those who need it; to encourage the timid; to strengthen the weak; to point out the way to those who have lost it; to "weep with those that weep, and to rejoice with them that do rejoice?"

Are we not *Brethren* too, as these sons of Jacob were? We have all one Father.

We have all the same happy home before us. We all hope to meet there. Then why should we envy one another, and suspect one another, and fall out with one another by the way? Why should it not be said of us now, as it once was, "See how these Christians love one another"?

Let us never forget that we are brethren. Let us pray that that happy time may come to us, which the Prophet Isaiah describes, when he says, "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim."

And bear in mind too, that we are not only *one another's* brethren, but *Christ's* brethren. *He* is "not ashamed to call us brethren." And surely we disgrace our holy relationship to Him, if we fall out among ourselves. He is "our peace." Let us therefore daily copy His bright example, and "be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love," ever ready to forgive, as we hope to be forgiven.

Again, we are all alike *sinner*s before God.



We are all in the same condemnation. Have we not in ten thousand ways offended our Lord? Have we not grieved Him by our sins? Have we not felt coldly towards Him? Instead then of falling out with one another, have we not reason, each one of us, to fall out with himself; to be less quick in condemning our brethren, and to be more quick in condemning ourselves?

Here then are three reasons why we should not fall out. 1st. We are fellow-travellers by the same way. 2dly. We are brethren. 3dly. We are all alike guilty ones before God.

But I have three more reasons yet to give. One is, that *we shall not be together long*. For a few years at most shall we dwell here together. We shall soon be leaving this world in which we sojourn. Time is too short to be wasted in disputes. Eternity is too near for us thus to trifle. During then our short stay here, "if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, let us live peaceably with all men." "Let

all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put from us, with all malice ; and let us be one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us."

Then too, how it will grieve us to fallen out *when our journey is ended*.

we lie on a sick bed, and all the past rushing in before us, how it will grieve to think of all the hard words we spoken, all the unkind expressions we used, and all the little trifles that stirred up our anger !

Or, again, if any one of our neighbours should be taken from us, how bitter the thought be, " I remember the time I pained that dear brother by my unkindness. I gave him a rough answer. I accused him wrongfully. Or, I said things of him, which he by no means deserved. But he is now gone, and I cannot recal the past, or make amends to him for what I have done."

Oh then let us speak kindly and act kindly towards our fellow-man, for we shall soon wish to have done so when our journey is over, and we shall part to meet here no more.

There is yet one other reason I must give you why we should not "fall out by the way," and that is, because *our Lord has given us much the same charge* as Joseph gave his brothers: "This is my commandment (He says) that ye love one another." Where He dwells, all is love; and when He looks down from heaven, is He not grieved when he notices the jarrings and disagreements which too often break the peace of his children? He would have us to live together in love. He tells us, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

Are not these strong reasons why we should seek to dwell together in peace, and avoid anything that would lead us to fall out by the way?

Let us see then how we can best accom-

plish this. I am sure that each one of us may do something towards it.

1st. Let us be more *forbearing* — more patient with those who, we think, have wronged us. We must put up with something for Christ's sake. We must "bear and forbear." We must be willing even to suffer *wrongfully* for Christ's sake. See how the meek and loving Saviour acted; "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously." And so should we, who are His followers, ever act; "for (says the Apostle) this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering *wrongfully*. For what glory is it if, when ye are buffeted for your *faults*, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do *well*, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

2nd. Check yourself when you feel dis-

posed to *judge harshly* of any one. Are we not all much too ready to do this? But what says our Lord? "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what measure ye mete (or measure), it shall be measured to you again." Then, you see, if we are severe in *our* judgments, we too shall be severely judged ourselves.

How is it oftentimes with us? We hear of a neighbour having acted, as we think, wrongly. We at once judge him. Without knowing all, we at once condemn his conduct; when perhaps if we looked a little more closely into the case, we should see reason to justify him.

Again, how ready we are to talk one another over; to pick out every little stain in our brother's robe; to mark every failing, instead of concealing it from the eyes of our fellow-men. Should we not rather try to look kindly on another's faults, and harshly on our own? Should we not be disposed to think the *best* of others, instead of thinking the *worst* of them? St. Paul says of true

Christian love, "It suffereth long, and is kind: it thinketh no evil: it hopeth all things." The Christian should hate sin wherever he finds it, either in himself or in others. He must not "call evil good." But it ought to pain him when he sees sin; and he ought to be very slow in fastening it upon his brother.

Beware then of judging harshly of any one. Check yourself when you feel disposed to condemn. And if ever anything like pleasure springs up within you when you hear of another's faults, go and weep for yourself, that you can have a heart so unlike that of a meek and loving Christian. And go too and think of yourself, how many, many sins the piercing eye of God can discover in *your own* character.

Another thing I would recommend is, to be always ready to *make up quarrels*. Has any one offended you, and are you angry with him? "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Forgive if you hope to be forgiven. What is the prayer

you offer up daily? Is it not "Forgive us *our* trespasses, as *we* forgive them that trespass against us?" This is a very solemn petition to make. For see what it comes to. You ask God to deal with you just as you are dealing with your brother. Are you at enmity with him? Is he unforgiven by you? Then only fancy what awful words you are uttering. You are, in fact, asking God to be at enmity with you, and to leave you without forgiveness, as you leave your brother. Just think this over, if you have a quarrel, or if you bear malice against any man.

Ah, you will say, but he is in the wrong. And are not *you* in the wrong with God? Let him be ever so wrong—you may have all the right on your side—still forgive him.

Christ says, "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?" "But I say unto you, Love

your enemies." Yes, and the true Christian has a feeling of love even for his bitterest enemy. He "blesses them that curse him, does good to them that hate him, and prays for them that despitefully use him and persecute him."

This is hard (you will say) to human nature. But remember, the Christian has a *new* nature. He "has the mind that was in Christ." And to those who have learnt of Him, the yoke of forgiveness is easy and the burden light.

But when we see a man fighting against God, should we still love him? Yes, while we abhor his conduct, and grieve over his rebellion, we should feel the tenderest compassion for his soul; we should yearn over him, and love him still. Christ loves him, and so should we. We should pray for him earnestly, if peradventure God may yet change his heart. We cannot look into the future. The outcast prodigal may yet repent. He may yet come to himself, arise, and go to his Father. And God may wipe



way his stains, cover his unrighteousness, and pardon all his sin. In spite of present appearances, a change may be wrought in him; he may one day be numbered among the sons of God; and over the sinner, whom we have loved in obedience to God's command, we may yet rejoice with the angels of heaven.

Learn then to love even those who have wronged you. Pray that you may have a meek, forbearing, forgiving spirit. Let God's children try to "live peaceably with all men," and especially with one another. *It ought* to be so, and it *will* be so, if we have the mind of Christ, and if His love burns brightly in our hearts. Strong indeed is the bond which binds God's family together. The world knows nothing of it. The friendships of the world, the best of them, are but tied with chains of glass; they are brittle and worthless. But the love of Christians is a golden chain, precious, strong, and lasting. We know it now to our comfort. But hereafter we shall see it and feel

it in perfection. One paradise will shelter us all. One feeling, one o one desire, will fill every breast. And cord of sacred love will unite us al ever.

KIND WORDS.

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SPEAK kindly to thy fellow-man,  
Lest he should die, while yet  
Thy bitter accents wring his heart,  
And make his pale cheek wet.

Speak to him tenderly ; for he  
Hath many toils to bear ;  
And he is weak, and often sighs—  
As thou dost—under care.

Speak to him lovingly ; he is  
A brother of thine own :  
He well may claim thy sympathies,  
Who's bone of thine own bone.

Speak to him meekly ; he may be  
A holier man than thou ;  
And fitting it may be for thee,  
To him with reverence bow.

Speak to him solemnly ; for thou  
And he must surely meet,  
To make account for idle words,  
Before the judgment-seat.

Speak to him faithfully ; thy word  
May touch him deep within,  
And save his erring soul from death,  
And cover o'er his sin !

## SERMON XXII.

## THE SERVANT OF CHRIST.

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JOHN XII. 26.

any man serve me, let him follow me; and where  
I am, there shall also my servant be."

servant of Christ—this is the character  
which is here set before us. And this is a  
character which our Lord pronounces to be  
blessed; for He says, "If any man  
love me, him will my Father honour."

May there be an increasing number of  
those whom God thus honours!

Now, in the text, Jesus tells us two  
things:—1st, What should be the conduct

of His servant; and, 2ndly, What will be his *reward*.

As to his *Conduct*, he will *follow* Christ;  
 “If any man serve me, let him *follow* me.”

But how should we follow Him ?

In the first place, we should follow Him in *faith*. The first followers of our Lord actually *saw* Him. They heard His words, and beheld His works. But *we* have never seen Him; and yet we are called upon to believe on Him, if we would be saved. This is faith. And whence comes it? God only can enable us to believe in an unseen Saviour, so as to trust our souls to Him with full confidence that He can save us. Faith is a direct gift from God. By nature we are unbelievers. We are born with “an evil heart of unbelief.” And it is only when that unbelieving heart is put away, and a new heart is given us, that we can be said to have faith in Christ. *Before*, we were content to express with our lips that we were sinners, and to profess our depend-

ence on Christ as a Saviour; but *now*, we feel the weight, the guilt, the hatefulness of sin; and Christ is made known to us as our all-sufficient Deliverer. Do you not see what a vast difference there is between that cold and formal acknowledgment of Jesus as a Saviour, and this warm and affectionate reliance on Him; this eager stretching-out of the whole soul to Him as our Redeemer, and our God? "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

*Faith* then is one main feature in the character of those who would be followers of Christ. Thus St. Paul says, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live *by the faith* of the Son of God."

Next, we must follow our Lord in the narrow path of *obedience*.

And is not this the happiest path? Is not that man the happiest, who is walking the most closely with his God, who is

endeavouring, not in *one or two* things, but in *all* things, to obey the Saviour's precepts? The life of a thorough Christian is one of the truest peace; but a half Christian enjoys no peace.

If I was asked to pick out the unhappiest man in my parish, I am not sure that I should look for him among those who are *given up to sin*. Such men are certainly unhappy; but their conscience is so far deadened, that they do not feel their unhappiness. There are yet more miserable than these.

Neither, again, should I look for him among those whose hearts are *entirely given to the world*, and who live from day to day as though this world was their home. No, for these have some enjoyment, poor as it is. And as long as the world goes well with them, they care for little else, and are light-hearted, and do not concern themselves about the future.

Nor would I go to the *house of mourning*,



to look for him there. I should hear, no doubt, in such a house, the bitter cry of sorrow. I should find there bleeding hearts, and blighted hopes. Truly I should find unhappiness there. But might there not be a bright ray of comfort to cheer that gloom? Might not the Saviour be speaking the sweetest peace to those sorrow-stricken hearts?

Where then should I find the unhappiest man of all; the man who has literally no peace, no rest whatever? I should find him perhaps in the midst of God's children; mixed among the sheep of Christ, feeding with them, but receiving no nourishment; going in and out among them, but not finding pasture. Yes, depend upon it, the very unhappiest man of all is the *disobedient professor of the Gospel*; the man who wishes to pass for a follower of Christ, but whose conscience is for ever smarting for some wilful act of disobedience; who has tasted something of the good word of

God, and the powers of the world to come, and yet is dishonouring God by a careless, unwatchful life. He knows too much of his Saviour, to find rest and happiness in the world; and yet he loves and serves Him too little to gain peace—an undecided, inconsistent man, in words professing love to his Lord, but in deeds denying Him.

If you wish to find happiness in religion, learn to follow Christ *closely and obediently*.

Again, if any man serve Christ, he must follow Him with *boldness*. Those who would be His soldiers, must be ready to fight, ready to endure, ready to take up their cross. If we would *reign* with Him, we must be prepared to *suffer* with Him. In the early days of the Christian Church there was much to test and try the followers of Christ. Were they ready to bear losses, to suffer, to die, for the faith? When James and John came to Jesus, and said, "Grant unto us, that we may sit, one on

Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy glory," our Lord questioned them whether they could *suffer*; "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism which I am baptized with?" Now, I ask, could *you*? Have *you* the heart to follow your Saviour *even in suffering*? Is your love so warm, and so self-denying, that you feel as though you could give up *all* for His sake? "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." Can you heartily agree to this? If a choice were made to you, this very day, either to give up your life, or to deny the faith, are you prepared to choose death, rather than forsake your Lord?

May God enable us to give an honest and true answer to this question. And if, whilst I have asked it, your heart has felt any misgiving, then this should be a hint to you, that you are not decided enough for Christ, and that perhaps you have never

come up to those searching words of our Lord ; “ He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

Yes, boldness is just as needful now, as it was in the days of persecution. Christ’s servant will not probably be called upon to lay down his life for his Master ; but he should have the will, the readiness to do so. He must still have the *spirit* of a martyr. He must not be afraid of a little reproach, or shrink back in the hour of danger. It is not enough to be Christ’s follower when all is safe, or when there are many with us. But when we stand *alone*, and when the tide sets in against us, and many are ranged in opposition to us ; when religion is sneered at, and the beloved name of Christ is reviled—then to make a firm stand, and to witness a good confession,—this is the boldness which our Lord approves, and is worthy of His true and faithful servant.

Once more, we must follow the Saviour *meekly*. How often does Satan try to ruin a child of God by puffing him up. He stirs up within us a desire to be noticed, and to be thought much of. But sure I am, that the more grace we have, the more lowly we shall become. Happy is it, if we are of this meek and humble spirit! When I see a Christian putting himself forward, thrusting himself into notice, talking loudly of what he once was, and of what he is now, speaking much of the blindness of others, and speaking confidently of himself, I am inclined to suspect that man. Either he is altogether deceiving himself, and it is not God's work at all; or else, if the Holy Spirit has indeed awakened him, it is clear that he has still a great deal to learn.

But if, on the other hand, I could know a person who had been long silently bearing the Cross, who had been long studying his Bible, searching for that

treasure in it which can save his soul, praying over it in secret, and under the teaching of the Spirit drinking in its precious life-giving truth; if I could watch him struggling against sin; coming to the house of God; and whilst many approached Him with their lips, pouring out his heart before Him; enjoying prayer with the congregation of his fellow-worshippers, and feasting upon that Word which God employs his minister to deal out to him; and if I could see, that all the while, though this great work was going on within, he was content to remain unknown and unnoticed, having such a deep sense of his own unworthiness, that he shrunk from man's approval, I should feel a much surer hope of such a Christian as this. For I believe that such meek, devoted hearts are very dear to Christ. He loves to number such among His secret ones *now*; and He will one day *publicly* own them to be His, saying, "Come, ye

blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.”

Then you see, we must follow Christ with *faith*, with *obedience*, with *boldness*, and with *meekness*. And if this is indeed the case, must we not come to the conclusion that it is *no easy matter* to be a real servant of Christ? It is easy to approve of religion, and to be always wishing that we were religious, and to make every now and then a good resolution; but it is not easy, when it comes to the point, to take our stand in the little army of Christ. It is easy to speak of the necessity of a change of heart; but not so easy to show its reality, by leading a changed life ourselves. It is easy to talk of love to the Saviour; but not easy to give proof of its existence in our own hearts, by acts of cheerful self-denial. It is easy to get into a religious way of speaking, and to use Scripture expressions; but not so easy to lead such a consistent and holy life, that

those about us—those who are most with us—may plainly *see* it. What are we? I do not ask, what we are when we come together on Sunday, or when we are in the company of those who expect something from us. But, what are we at home,—in our families, in the every-day acts of life? What are we when alone, when no eye can reach us but God's? I am afraid there are many professing Christians, just dressed up, and painted on the outside; but if we could look within at their hearts, their feelings, their inner life, or at their daily conduct, we should find also much that was wanting. May this thought make each one of us look within; and may it bring us upon our knees, saying, "Search me, O God, and try my heart!"

Is it an easy matter then to be a true-hearted servant of Christ? Is it easy to surrender the heart, the affections, all to God? And if, through the powerful working of His grace, we *have* been enabled



to do so, still are there no difficulties in our course? Is the heaven we are striving for already won, and the victory we are fighting for already gained? Oh! is not the way steep? Have you not found it so, my fellow-Christian? Is it not hard to keep yourself unspotted from the world, and hard to struggle daily with an evil, rebellious heart? Sin hovers around us with terrible strength, even though we have declared it our enemy. It still hangs about us, and troubles us. It mingles with all we do, and is ever taking us by surprise. Thus it is not *one* battle merely that the Christian has to fight, but a *continual* warfare. He has a *daily* cross to bear, a *daily* call to mortify his own will; for these are still the words of Christ, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily."

I have a few more words to say, and these are respecting the Christian's *reward*.

There is a *present* reward to the believer. For who is so happy as he is? Who enjoys such solid peace and enjoyment *even now*? Though the service of Christ is a difficult service, it is a most blessed one. Though we have a daily, hourly warfare to fight, the Lord himself is ranged on our side. He will fight *for* us, and *with* us. There is a cross; but God can lighten. There is a yoke; but Christ can make it easy. Tell me, you who are Christian pilgrims, amidst all the trials and weariness of your journey, are there not abundant comforts by the way? Is there not a peace which is unknown to the world, but which you experience? Tell me, would you exchange one of those hours in which you feel the comfort of your Saviour's presence, for the richest enjoyment which this world can afford?

But the Christian's time of *perfect, unmixed happiness* is yet to come. Our Lord tells us in the text what will be hereafter

is faithful servant's reward; "Where I am there shall also my servant be." And you remember that just as He was leaving His disciples, He gave them this most comforting assurance; "I go and prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that *where I am* there ye may be also." Even now the Christian feels much enjoyment in his Master's service, and is comforted with the feeling that his Lord is near him. But *soon* he shall be admitted into His very presence. Do we enjoy something of Christ's peace now? Are there times when our souls can indeed rejoice in the Lord? Then let these blessed seasons remind us of a brighter and a clearer day, where, free from sin, we shall behold Emmanuel. Let us try and fix our eyes on the pleasant land before us. *There* is all that we can desire. *There* is gathered a goodly company of God's people, "washed

in the blood of the Lamb.” What more? God is there, our portion, our happiness. And in His presence fulness of joy. Is not this truly comforting cheering promise,—“When I am, there shall my servant be”? .

## SERMON XXIII.

## BAPTISM.

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GALATIANS III. 27.

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.”

How seldom do people think, and how very little do they know, about the ordinance of Baptism! Let us now spend a little while in looking into this subject. And may God enable us to get a few clear and right views upon it!

A A

I will remind you, at starting, of *the command* which Christ has given us concerning Baptism.

Next I shall speak of *the nature and object* of Baptism. And then I will mention *a few particulars* concerning it.

Now, our Lord has given His Ministers a plain, simple command about Baptism. The last words He uttered, just before He went up into heaven, were, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Here then ministers plainly see what is *their* duty—to baptize people. And here you may learn that it is *your* duty to be baptized. But there is not a word said in the New Testament about *infants*. Still we may gather it from many passages of Scripture. For instance, our Lord graciously received little children, when they were brought to Him: "Suffer them (He says) to come unto me,

and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Then, we read of *whole households* being baptized; and we can hardly suppose there were no children among them. Again, we find the Jews were commanded to *circumcise their Infants*, when they were eight days old. And as baptism has taken the place of circumcision, it follows that infants, when very young, may be baptized. There is another very strong argument which may be brought forward. It is, that ever since the time of the apostles down to the present hour, it has been the practice of the Christian Church, in every country, to admit *Infants* to the holy ordinance of Baptism.

Thus then you see that Baptism is commanded by our Lord Himself. We gather too from Scripture, that the baptism of *Infants* is according to His will. And further, that it is now, and it *always has been*, the practice of the Christian Church. Can we be right then in thinking lightly of it?

Can parents be right in delaying the baptism of their children, and thus shutting them out of their Christian birthright? Can it be right to look upon this holy ordinance, appointed by Christ Himself, as a mere matter of form? No; the bringing your little ones to be christened is a very solemn and important work, and one which I hope you will look upon in a very serious light.

Let us go on now to inquire, What is *the nature and object* of Baptism?

It is the ordinance by which we are admitted into Christ's Church. By nature we are heathens; but by Baptism we become Christians. By nature we are the children of wrath; by Baptism we are made the children of grace. When you bring your children to the font, you offer them to Christ, that they may be His, that He may take them under His care, and number them among *His flock*. They henceforth belong to God's



family, and are allowed to call Him their Father and their Friend.

Baptism is also the ordinance in which *we profess to belong to Christ*. We are thus solemnly devoted to Him, as His soldiers and servants. The servants belonging to a family are often clothed in a particular dress. The soldiers belonging to a regiment are known by having on the regimentals belonging to that body. The members of a club often wear some special badge or dress to mark them. Now, St. Paul says in our text, "As many as are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." We put on, as it were, His livery. We are signed with the sign of His cross, "in token that hereafter we should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, but manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil; and continue His faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives' end."

We are brought into quite a new state

by being baptized. We become Christ's property; not our own, but His. We solemnly pledge ourselves to be His servants. When a child has been baptized we say that it has been "regenerated;" that means, brought into a new state. Its heart and nature may be still unchanged; but it is placed in a new condition. It has now got new duties to perform; it has new hopes set before it; God is its Father; Christ is its Saviour; the Holy Spirit its guide and helper; and heaven is its home, if only it will seek to enter in.

Must it not be wrong then to look at Baptism as a mere outward form—a thing that must be gone through, it matters not how? And are we not depriving our children of a vast blessing by not bringing them early to Christ? What comfort a parent ought to feel in bringing his child to the house of God, almost as soon as it is born, and giving it to Christ! Why, you know that your very children have the stain of sin.

upon them. They were born in sin, and have a corrupt nature. Do they not then need a Saviour? Do they not need to be washed in His atoning blood? They are weak too, and they stand in great want of the strength and grace of the Holy Spirit. Then is it not a comfort to you to bring them to God in baptism, and entrust them to His safe keeping? They have a world of sin and a world of danger before them; and shall they go through it without a protector? Oh, bring them in faith, believing, praying, trusting in God's promises; and a blessing will surely be given.

I will now say a few words about *Sponsors*. We read nothing about Godfathers and Godmothers in Scripture. But the custom of having them seems to have been very soon introduced into the Christian Church. It was found necessary. And our own Church still adopts it. If Sponsors come forward and merely repeat a few answers, and then

go away and think no more about the child, *then* their office is indeed most useless and unmeaning. But if they undertake it as a solemn duty, with serious feelings, and seeking for God's blessing, *then* there is much more in it than we are apt to think. For what is a Sponsor's duty?

His duty is to go with the parents to church, and there to stand in the child's stead, and as the child's friend. It is too young to promise obedience and faith; and therefore the godfather and godmother promise for it. They give the pledge, which the child cannot give itself. They promise in the child's name that it will not serve the devil, but that it will serve God and believe in His Son. They cannot of course foresee how the child will turn out. But they promise this in the spirit of Christian charity, hoping and trusting that by God's help it will grow up as a real servant of Christ. They kneel with the parents around the font, and join them in

earnest prayer to God for His heavenly blessing.

And when they go away from the church, their duty is only half done. They are to see that the child is brought up as a Christian, in the fear and love of God. If its parents do their duty, all is well. But if not, then it is clearly a Sponsor's duty to speak to them in a kind and Christian manner, and show them that he feels a deep interest in his godchild. It is his duty to pray for it, to ask God to give it His Holy Spirit, and to touch its heart.

And now do we shrink from so solemn an office? Are you disposed to say, It is so great a responsibility, there is something so serious in it, that I dare not undertake it? It is certainly a very important office to take upon oneself. But it is one that every Christian ought to be ready to undertake cheerfully, as an act of Christian friendship, and as a delightful

Christian duty. I would strongly recommend both parents and sponsors to read the service over carefully before they bring the child to be baptized.

And there is another thing which I would earnestly press upon all parents. And that is, to be very careful to get *religious* persons to act as sponsors. How can you expect a blessing without it? Is it not a mockery for a worldly, ungodly man to go and promise for another what he is not performing, or trying to perform, himself? Choose, if you can, serious, well-disposed persons to be the spiritual guardians of your little ones. You will be able to consult them if necessary. They will care for your children; and you will have the comfort of knowing that many an earnest prayer has been offered for them.

It is often asked, *May not parents stand for their own child?* Are not *they* the properest persons? No, and

for this reason: a father or mother is *already* bound to take care of the child. It is a duty which naturally belongs to them. But the Church requires an additional security over and above the parents themselves.

Oh, if our baptisms were undertaken more thoughtfully, and if sponsors only did their duty, then we should soon see how wisely all is arranged, and a large blessing would attend them.

But there is another point connected with baptism which I must notice. Having brought your children to Christ, you must remember that it is your duty, as parents to watch over them most carefully, to pray for them daily, and to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Teach them to feel that they belong to Christ's flock; that He has received them into His favour; and that they are pledged to serve Him. Try

and win their hearts. Make religion a pleasure to them, not a dry task. Endeavour, if you love them, to keep them out of evil. Guard their tender souls against temptation. Tell them that their Father loves them, and that it is an honour and a delight to serve so kind and good a Master.

Fathers and mothers, I tell you plainly that baptism will do little for your children, and sending them to school will do little for them, unless you *watch over them at home*. What they hear and what they see at home will either undo, or else strengthen the good which they get elsewhere. If you take ever so much pains in planting a young tree, if you dig about it and dung it, and carefully water it in dry weather ; and then another person comes after you and neglects it, or scratches away the soil from under it, and lays it open to the burning heat of the sun, all will be in vain ; the tree



will not prosper. And so it is with your little ones. Depend upon it, if you leave them to themselves, if you do not shield them from temptation, and follow up as much as you can what has been done for them, all will be to little purpose. God has given you children that you may bring them up for Him. He gives you a charge over them that you may prepare their souls for heaven, and that they may be formed and moulded into His own most blessed image.

I trust that the remarks which I have now made may be found useful to some. And why not useful to all? All, or nearly all of us, have been baptized. Our parents and god-parents brought us to Christ, it may be many years ago. He received us. We have professed to belong to Him ever since. We promised by the mouth of others that we would turn away from sin, and the world, and the devil,

and that we would serve Christ. And then we promised this again, with our own mouths, when we were confirmed. Now, have we been faithful? What a solemn thought! St. Paul says in our text, "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." How is it with ourselves? Is it anything more than a mere outward profession? We are members of His Church; but are we living members? We are branches of the vine; but are we bearing fruit? We are His *in name*, but are we anything more? Are we His *in practice*? It will be of little use hereafter to say, "I was a Christian: I was one of Christ's baptized ones." The question is, Are you really a Christian at heart? Can you say with the Apostle, "To me to live is Christ;" "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"? He is not a Christian who is one *outwardly*,

but he is a Christian who is one *inwardly*.  
“As many as are *led by the Spirit of God*,  
they are the sons of God.”

Surely our case is worse than that of heathens, if we are not loving and serving Christ. Take an ungodly Christian, and put an ignorant heathen by his side. Now, which of the two is the guiltiest and the furthest from the kingdom of heaven? There is no comparison between the two. The one has sinned ignorantly; the one has gone wrong in the dark. But the other has sinned knowingly; the light has shone brightly, but he has shut it out; he has wilfully taken the wrong road.

I believe this, that the more pains ministers take to teach you, and the more God's blessings cluster around you, the more tremendous will be your condemnation, if your hearts remain unmoved. It will be more tolerable for wicked Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than

for you. You have been "baptized into Christ." You have been received into His flock. The Good Shepherd has cared for you. His sheltering wings have been over you. Is there anything that He has withheld from you? anything more that He could have done for you? Oh then rise up and follow your Lord. Let your few remaining years be spent in His happy service, and in doing His blessed will.

## SERMON XXIV.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER.

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· LUKE XXII. 19.

“This do in remembrance of me.”

How is it, that for the last eighteen hundred years Christians have been accustomed to meet together at certain seasons in the year, to eat bread and to drink wine together? It always has been the custom, and it is the custom now. If you were to go into the farthest countries of the earth, wherever you found any Christians, you would find that this custom is kept up; and we all know that such is the practice in our Church in England. How is this? and where did it first begin?

We have only to look into the chapter before us, and we shall soon see. It appears that our Lord, on the evening before He was crucified, called His twelve apostles together, and sat down to table with them. After their meal was ended, when their minds were very thoughtful and very sad at the idea of losing Him, He suddenly did something, which must have made a great impression on the whole company. He took bread into His hands, broke it up, and gave a piece of it to each of His disciples, saying to them, "This is my body which is given for you." Then He took a cup full of wine, and said, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you." And He added, "This do in remembrance of me." After He was gone from them, they were to do this again and again; in order to keep up in their minds a remembrance of His suffering. When He said concerning the bread, "This is my body," He could not have meant that it was no longer bread, but that it was flesh and

bones. No, He meant by it, "This bread *represents* my broken and suffering body; and this wine *represents* to you my blood which is poured out for sinners."

From that moment the followers of Christ have never forgotten His command. In former times they used to meet for this purpose *once a week*, or even oftener. We read of this in the Acts of the Apostles. For instance, in chapter ii. 46, we are told that they "continued *daily* with one accord in the temple, breaking bread from house to house." They had no churches to meet in, and therefore they were forced to receive this holy ordinance in one another's houses. In chapter xx. 7, we read of the disciples coming together on the first day of the week (or Sunday) to break bread." In the eleventh chapter of 1 Corinthians, St. Paul speaks much on this subject. These Corinthians had been converted by the Apostle. After he left them, their numbers greatly increased. In many respects all went on well in that Church; but they fell

into a very bad habit about the Lord's Supper. They did not receive it with proper reverence; and soon got to look upon it with little more respect than a common feast. This led St. Paul to speak very strongly to them; "What! (he says,) have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." Then he reminds them how solemnly the Lord had appointed this blessed ordinance; and adds, "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

This was strong language; but not too strong, considering how shamefully these Corinthians had abused this solemn feast.



They had indeed, many of them, been eating and drinking unworthily ; and so, instead of getting a blessing to their souls, they only ate and drank to their own condemnation.

I feel that this holy sacrament is of great importance to us all. And I shall try to speak very plainly to you about it, for I wish you to understand me.

Now, I shall dwell especially upon two points.

*First*, What are the benefits we get by receiving the Lord's Supper ? And *secondly*, Who are invited to come ?

One benefit we get from receiving the Lord's Supper, is that we are specially *reminded of our blessed Lord's sufferings*. Oh, how backward we are to think of them ; and yet what need we have to be continually dwelling upon them ! Christ's death upon the cross is the great object of our hope. What has a penitent sinner to rest upon but this ? Where else can he look for pardon

and comfort? Now, in the Lord's Supper a crucified Saviour is brought before our very eyes. The Bread reminds us of that body, which was broken and bruised as a punishment for our sins. And the Wine, which we see, leads us to think of that precious blood, which was so freely poured out to cleanse the guilty. Thus, as the Apostle says, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this wine, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come." Our poor dull hearts are very slow to fix themselves on Christ. We want something to place Him actually before us; and this is done in that holy ordinance. This was one great object for which our Lord appointed it; "Do this (He said) in remembrance of me."

Again, by coming to this holy communion *our faith is strengthened, and our love increased.* Christ is specially present at His own table. He draws near to us, and manifests Himself to us. And is there any one of God's children who mourns that his

faith is sadly weak, and his love far too cold? No wonder, if he shuts himself out from Christ's table; no wonder, if he comes to it in a careless, formal manner. Let him come with humble earnestness, looking for a blessing, and anxiously praying for it; and most certainly he will obtain it. Just as bread and wine strengthen the body, so will the body and blood of Christ, received into his heart by faith, strengthen and refresh his soul.

By coming to the holy table, too, we make a public profession that *we desire to take Christ for our Master*. It is as though we said, "Whatever men may say, I am not ashamed to own Christ for my Lord. On this Crucified One I will rest all my hopes. I have pledged myself to follow Him, and now I pledge myself again. I will cast my lot among His people." The world may look coldly upon us, if we give ourselves to Christ. We may be called by hard names. But how little does it matter. It is better

to suffer a little contempt, than to lose our souls; better, far better, to be despised by man, than to be rejected by God. And it is necessary, indeed it is, if we would be his followers, to be decided. We must take up our Master's cross boldly. We must follow Him fearlessly. We must draw away from a wicked, thoughtless world, and draw near to our Lord.

It may be that you do earnestly desire to be on the Lord's side. There is something within which tells you that it is the best side, the happiest side, to be on. And if the Lord has begun a work of grace in your soul, welcome it with thankfulness; yield your heart to Him; and be ready to pledge yourself at His table, that you will henceforth count His service as your highest happiness.

There is another blessing, which we receive by joining in this holy sacrament. *Our hearts are drawn out towards our Christian brethren.* This cold world is apt to make

us selfish. But we can hardly help putting aside our selfish feelings, when we come up to this sacred feast. We look upon each one as a brother or sister in Christ. There may be some, even at that table, who are not true Christians. But still we judge them not. We love to think that we are members of one family, and that we are fellow-travellers towards heaven. We then feel that there is indeed a oneness, a union, between God's people, and our hearts are warmed towards each other; as the Apostle says, "we being many are one bread and one body, for all are partakers of that one bread."

You see then there are blessings, special blessings, belonging to this delightful ordinance. How much do we miss if we stay away! It cannot be a question of indifference whether we come or not. The matter stands thus: the Lord has provided a very rich and blessed feast for His people. He has directed them to partake of it; "*Do*

*this,*" He says. It is a command. Can a man then be in a safe state, if he neglects it? Can he say that he is in a fair way for heaven, if he leaves this command to be obeyed by *others*, but slights it *himself*? No, we have no right whatever to expect to receive Christ's grace, if we shut ourselves out from the means of grace. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, there is no life in you." Here is strength for your heavenly journey! Here is life for your souls! Here is spiritual bread to nourish you! Would I then have *all* come? Yes, if all were concerned about their souls; if all were earnestly seeking heaven. But, alas! I know too well that it is not so, much as I could wish it. Many of you, I fear, have not yet determined to follow Christ. The world as yet holds you fast; you are tied and bound by the chain of sin. Many of you are still careless and thoughtless, or at all events undecided. Christ offers Himself to you, but you do not love Him. Heaven is before you, but your

eyes are not turned towards it. Then I am bound to say, this holy sacrament is not for *you*.

Let us see then *secondly*, Who are invited to come.

*Every real Christian* is invited, every man whose heart is given to Christ. The Lord's Supper is for the Lord's servants. It is a spiritual feast for spiritual people. It is "the childrens' bread." Are you anxious to serve Christ and to be His? Are you willing to take up His cross? Are you ready to tread the path which He trod? Are you anxious above all things to be saved, though it cost you something? Is Christ so precious, that you are willing to tear yourself away from the world, and to break off every sin, for His sake? Then, as one of Christ's ministers, I bid you welcome to His table.

I would go further: There may be some who dare not as yet call themselves Christ's followers. They long to be His, but they

feel quite unworthy as yet to be numbered among His people. Perhaps religion is a new thing to them. They have only lately begun to think seriously about their souls. They hate their sins, and long to be released from them; but they have not yet found peace. They know something of Christ, but they feel that there is much more to be learnt. Do we invite such to come? Yes; we say to the humblest penitent; we say to the weakest believer; we say to those who are as yet babes in Christ, "Draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort."

My Christian brethren, do you feel that you are not fit to come? Now, I solemnly ask you—Is it that you love the world, and cannot give it up just yet? Is it that sin is dear to you, and you cannot turn away from it? Does your conscience tell you that something stands in the way between you and Christ? Then certainly you are not fit either for Christ's table now, or for His presence hereafter. That one thing, whatever



it is, stands in the way between you and your Saviour. And unless it is speedily removed, it will surely stand in the way between you and heaven. Oh, away with it at any price. If it be as dear to you as a right hand or a right arm, cut it off, and cast it from you. Cut it off, and then, but not till then, you will be welcome at the Lord's table.

But there may be some one who is saying in his heart, "I feel that I am not fit;" because he has a deep and contrite sense of his own unworthiness. He sees himself to be a sinner. He hates his sins. He rejoices in Christ as his only Saviour. He looks upon this sacrament as a very high and solemn ordinance; and he thinks that he is unworthy to partake of it. I believe that one in this humble state is of all others the most welcome to Christ. As to fitness in the strictest sense, we are none of us fit; we never shall be fit. The best worthiness to come with is a deep sense of our own unworthiness, smiting upon our

breasts, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Learn then that the Lord's table is not spread for the worldly and careless, nor even for those who are merely outwardly regular, without being religious. But it is for the humble penitent, for the earnest, devout believer; in short, for those in whom there is a work of grace begun or going on. We dare not invite the worldly. We dare not shut out the weakest believer.

And here let me say a word about the younger members of our congregations. I should be thankful to see more young men and young women at the Lord's table in every parish. Why not? Is Christ's service too dull for you? Is the world the only thing that can make you happy? Because many around you are thoughtless and trifling, is that any reason why *you* should forget that you have a soul to save and a God to serve? Is God satisfied that you should give your earliest and best days to the world, and then that you should just

leave a few years of your old age for Him? No. He will not be thus mocked. What says Solomon: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes. But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee unto judgment?"

My dear friends, it is a happy and blessed thing if you are led to give your youthful and healthful days to the Lord. His service is perfect freedom. There is a joy and peace in it, which the world can never give you. Then make up your mind to take the narrow path which leads to heaven. I know it requires an effort. The way may be difficult, especially at starting. It will cost you something. There must be a conflict. The world clings tight. Satan will not let you go without a struggle. You will meet with opposition. You must put up with many a jeer. But what will you gain? A calm and peaceful frame of mind.

a feeling that Christ is your dearest Friend, and that you are accepted and saved for His sake. And is not this worth a little sacrifice, and a little self-denial? Oh, then, come to Christ at once. Live not another day without Him. He is saying to you, "My son, give me thy heart." And will you not give it to Him? It is all you have to give Him. Give it then to-day. Leave your ungodly companions, and seek fresh ones. Read your Bible. Bend your knee often in prayer. Come regularly to the house of God. And think very seriously about coming to the holy table. Think who it is that calls you. It is He who loves you best; He who has given His life for you; He who has said, "This do in remembrance of me."



